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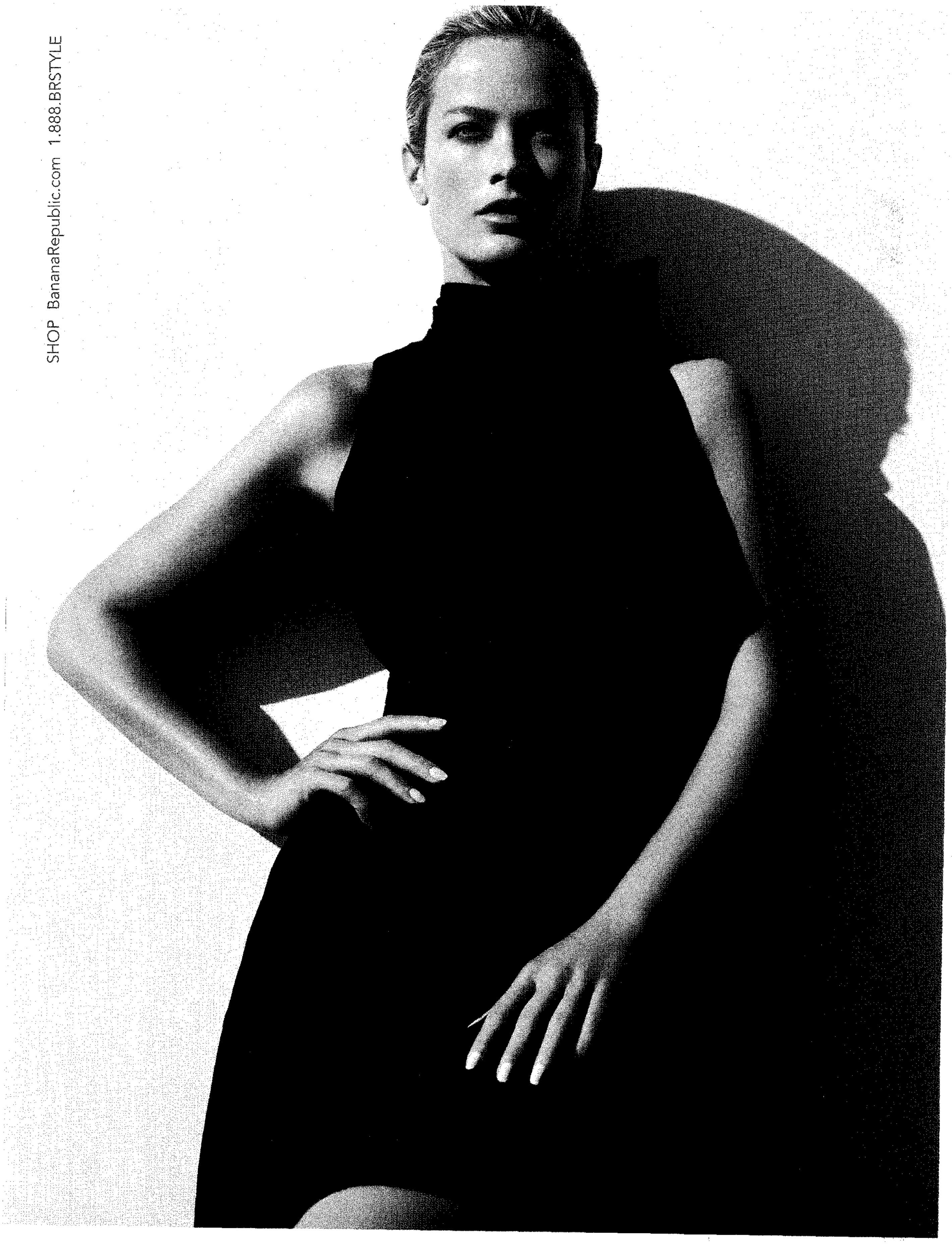
THE NEW YORKER

SEPT. 1, 2008



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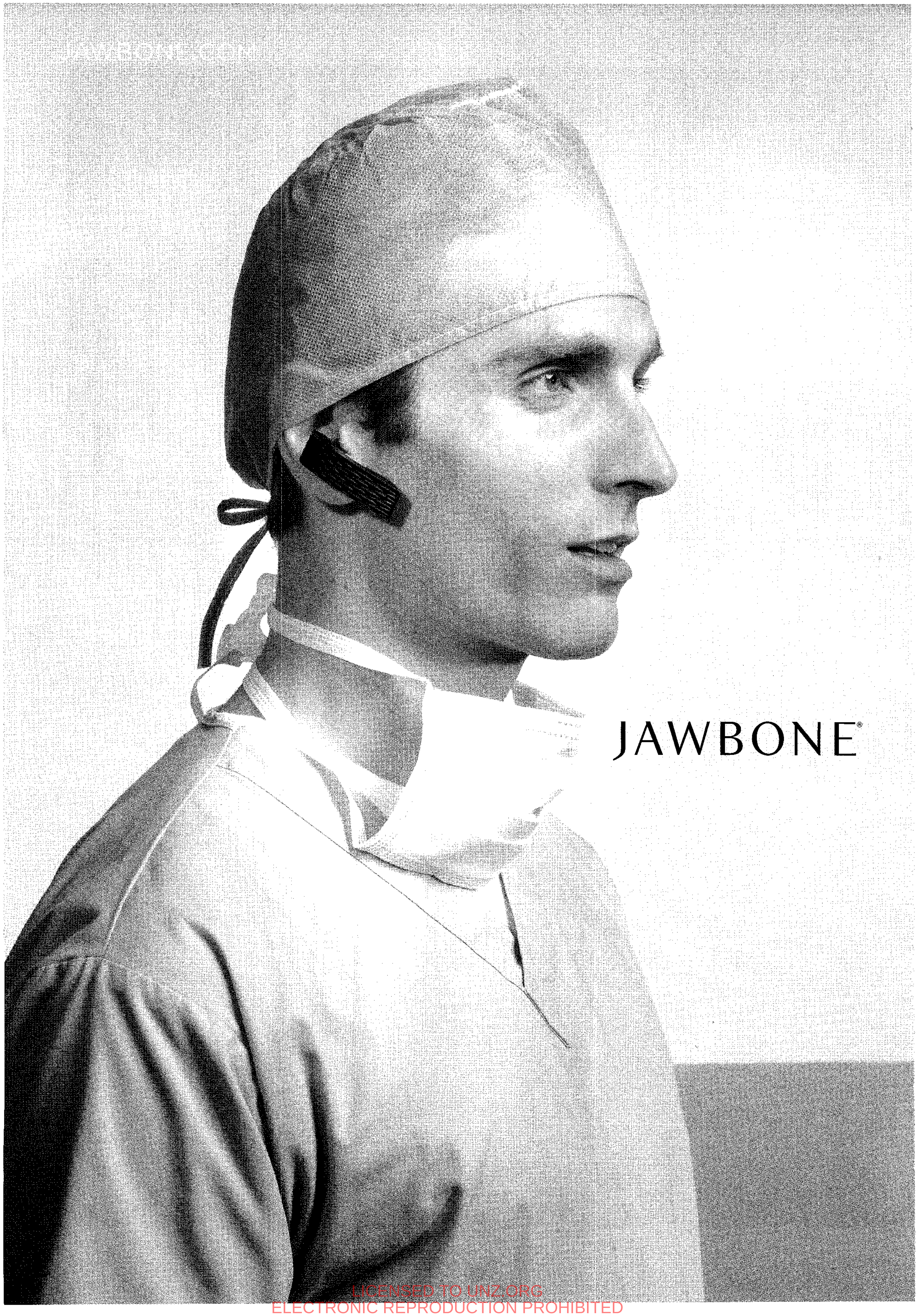
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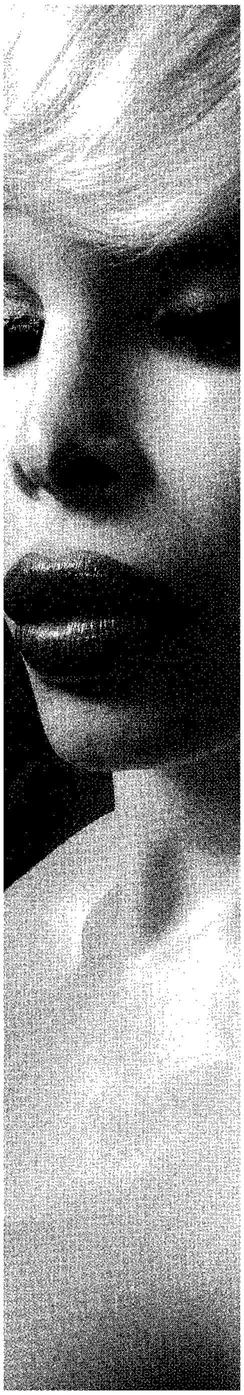

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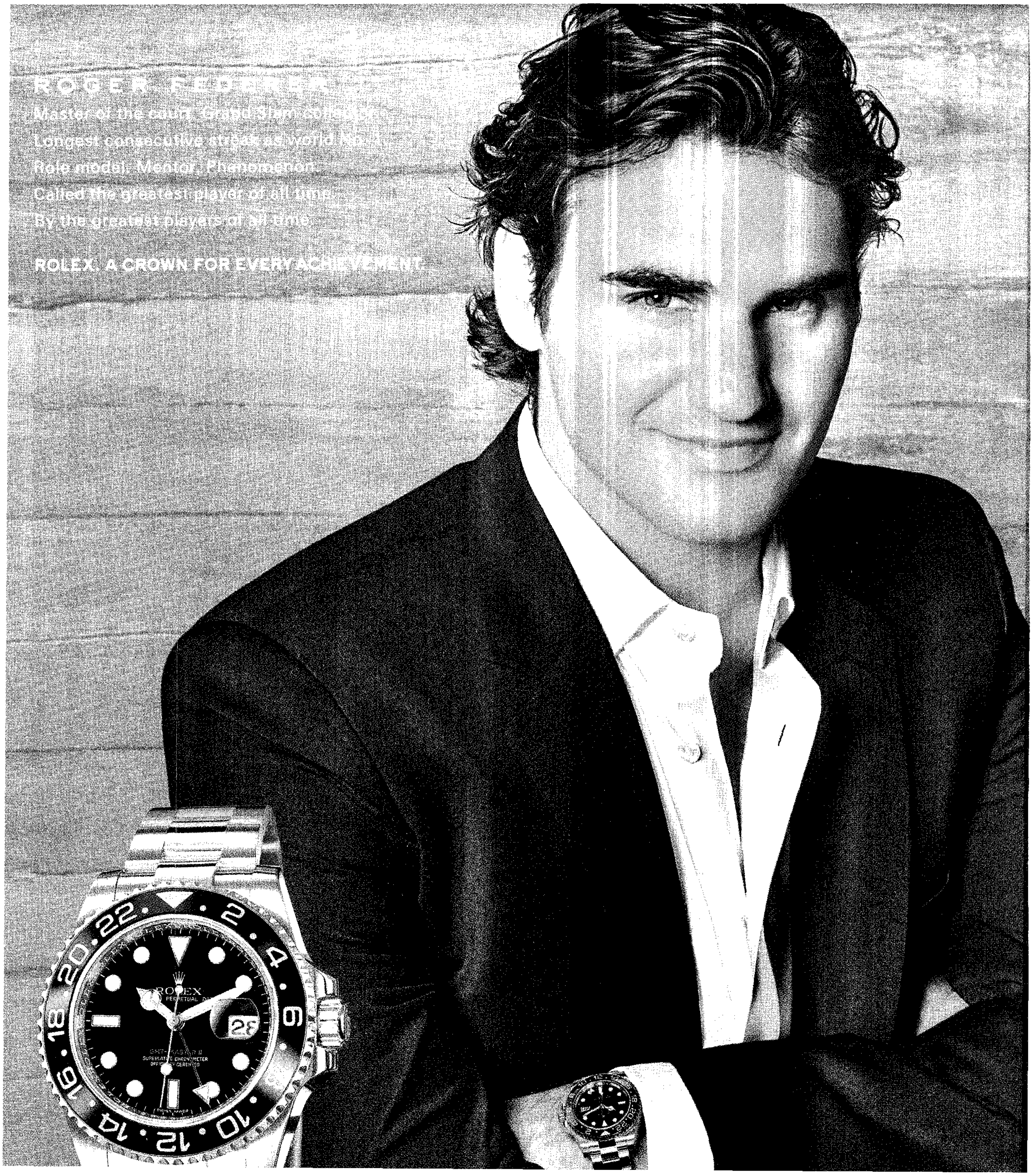
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DRAWINGS *David Sipress, Robert Leighton, Robert Mankoff, Zachary Kanin, Paul Noth, Leo Cullum, P. S. Mueller, Ariel Molvig, Danny Shanahan, Edward Koren, Matthew Diffee, William Haefeli, Jack Ziegler, Drew Dernavich, Frank Cotham*

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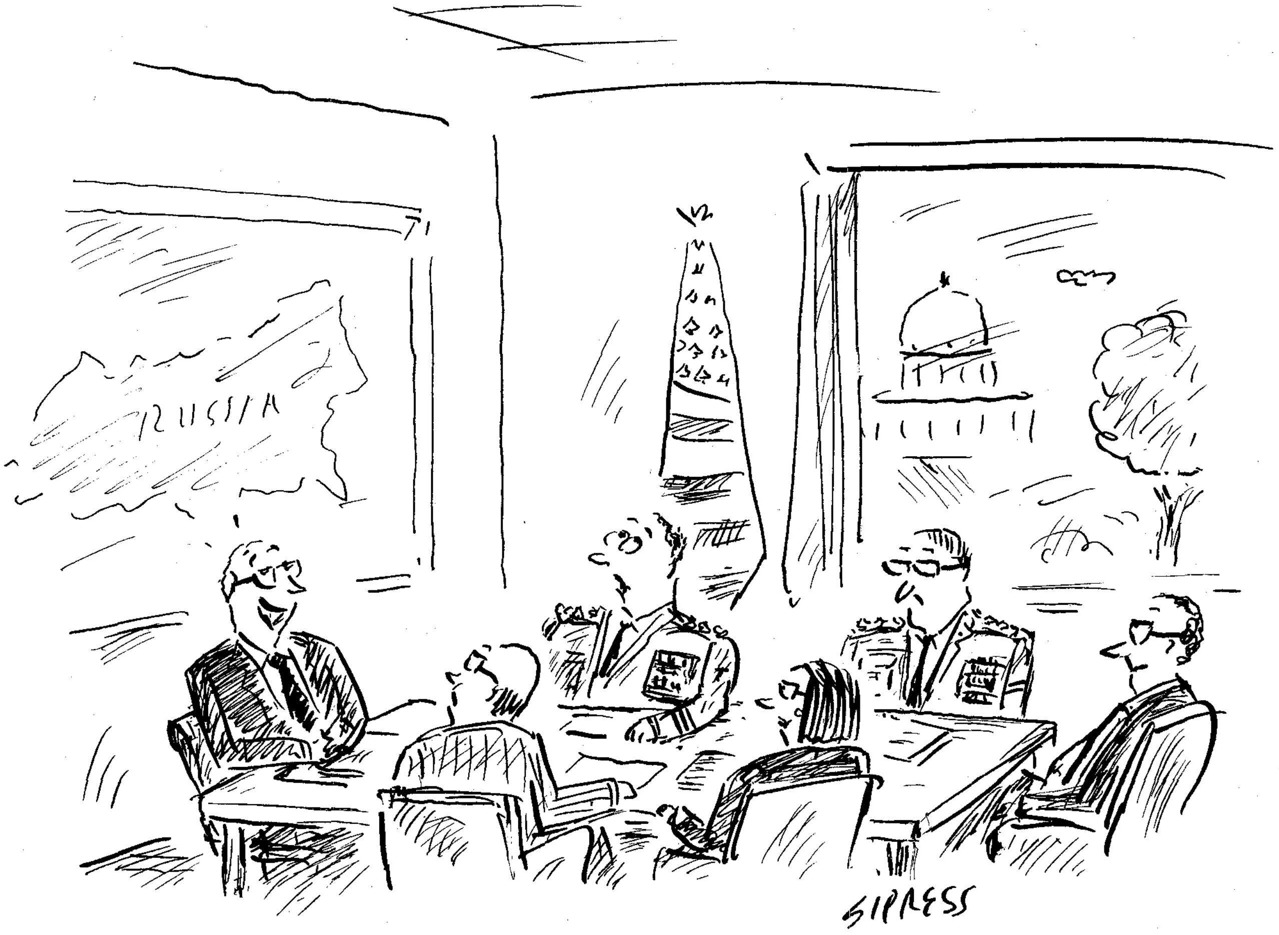

"The return of the Cold War—am I the only one who feels like I'm putting on a comfortable pair of old shoes?"

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CONTRIBUTORS

Ryan Lizza ("The Code of the West," p. 62) is the Washington correspondent for the magazine.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 53), the author of "Politics: Observations & Arguments," writes frequently about politics and policy. He also writes a blog on newyorker.com.

John Colapinto ("Stop, Thief!," p. 74) is a staff writer and the author of "As Nature Made Him" and "About the Author."

Patricia Marx ("Sole Sisters," p. 84) has a children's book, "Dot in Larryland," with illustrations by Roz Chast, coming out in December.

Michael Roberts (Illustration, p. 85) is the fashion and style director of *Vanity Fair*. His book "Fashion Victims" comes out this week.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 60), the author of "The Wisdom of Crowds," writes about economics, business, and finance for the magazine.

Jeffrey Skinner (Poem, p. 121) has published five poetry collections, including "Salt Water Amnesia." His play "Down Range" is due to open in New York next year.

Ariel Levy ("Enchanted," p. 90) is a staff writer.

Michael Dickman (Poem, p. 92), whose poems have appeared in *Field* and *Tin House*, will publish his first collection, "End of the West," next year.

Rebecca Mead ("Winged Victories," p. 106) has been writing for the magazine since 1997. Her book "One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding" has just come out in paperback.

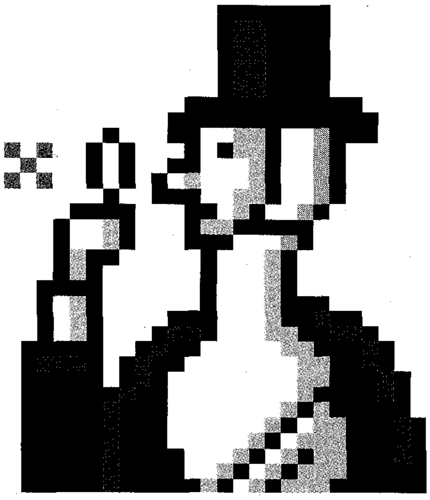
Janet Frame (Fiction, p. 118) was born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1924, and wrote more than twenty works of fiction, poetry, and memoir. This story was found among her papers after her death, in 2004.

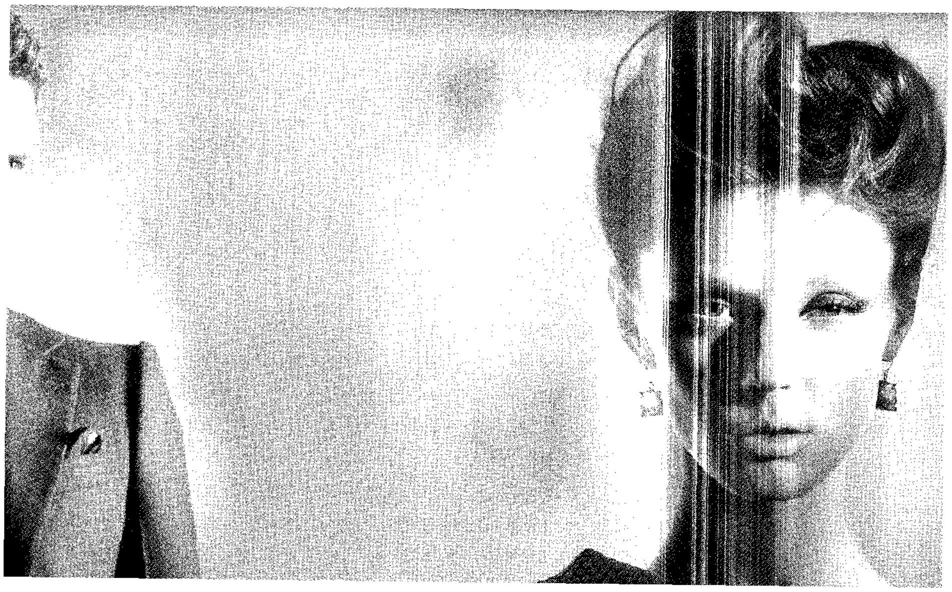
Austin Kelley (The Talk of the Town, p. 58) writes a weekly online column about soccer for *ESPN the Magazine*.

John Updike (Books, p. 124) contributes regularly to the magazine. "Due Considerations," his sixth collection of essays and literary criticism, comes out in paperback next month.

Ana Juan (Cover) has illustrated several children's books, including "The Elephant Wish," which will be published next month.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM
Hendrik Hertzberg and *George Packer* blog from the Democratic Convention, and *Dorothy Wickenden* hosts the Campaign Trail podcast from Denver. / Audio: *Nancy Franklin* on the Olympics. / Ask the Author: submit questions for *David Denby*. / Slide shows: Santiago Calatrava, vintage Max Factor ads, Kehinde Wiley. / Blogs by *Sasha Frere-Jones* and *Dana Goodyear*, plus the Book Bench, the Cartoon Lounge, and Goings On. / From the archives: *Hendrik Hertzberg* on Obama's 2004 keynote. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events.





THE MAIL

MOWING IT

Elizabeth Kolbert's suggestions about what we might do with our yards instead of having lawns are unrealistic (Books, July 21st). Don't mow and let it revert to meadow? That's not what happens. Our lawns are not planted with native grasses; what you'll get is a hideous tangled, tick-infested mess that you won't want to step into, and certainly won't let your kids or dogs play in. Plant trees? Sure, and wait thirty years for them to grow into a grove. Replace the lawn with wildflowers? First you'll have to eradicate the lawn grass, which is devilishly persistent, or the wildflowers won't have a chance. Those of us who prefer to have our houses look as if we still lived in them will continue to tend our lawns.

Michael Jorrin
Ridgefield, Conn.

As a reflection on what lawns mean to people, Gordon H. Orians, a professor emeritus of biology at the University of Washington, Seattle, took photographs of a wide variety of vegetation habitats and asked people around the world to rate them. African savannas were preferred by a large margin. We evolved in a habitat where short green grass provided evidence of abundant grazing mammals; pruned shrubs similarly evidenced lots of browsers; and open spaces meant we could see the dangerous lions, hyenas, and other predators. If we were to let our lawns grow up, we would provide attractive habitats for snakes, spiders, rodents, deer (the latter two spread lyme disease), deer flies, mosquitoes, and other undesirable organisms. We love lawns because they signify abundant water, lots of food, and freedom from parasites, disease, and other unpleasant neighbors.

Samuel J. McNaughton
Syracuse, N.Y.

GROWING IT

David Samuels's romantic romp through the marijuana fields missed the real story—the impact of this "gray-area" economy on the rural communities and natural environments suffering under the weight of an unregulated multibillion-dollar industry ("Dr. Kush," July 28th). We experience ecologically damaging clearing of trees and destruction of watersheds; poisoning of the ground with chemicals, diesel, and used oil from industrial-size generators; streams drying up as water is siphoned for the marijuana crops, with significant consequences for wildlife; threats to livestock and neighbors from vicious dogs and young men wielding guns. Because of ambiguities and discrepancies in the law, what Samuels refers to as "legal cultivation limits" can easily mean a grow operation of five hundred plants bringing tax-free revenues of one and a half million dollars. This is not a matter of a few plants, nor is it about compassionate caregivers helping out seriously ill people. We need federal legalization and regulation of this highly profitable industry.

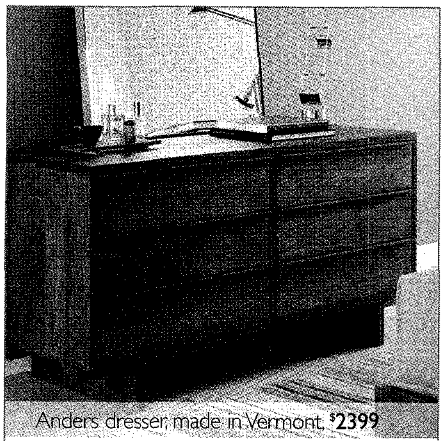
Deborah Pruitt
Willits, Calif.

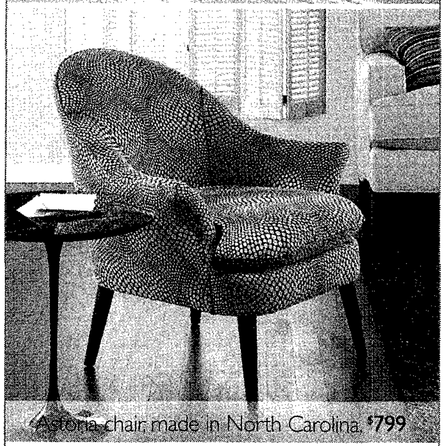
As Samuels identifies, the problem with industries in which contractual obligations (including verbal contracts) cannot be enforced by the courts is that they inevitably drift into exploitation and unethical business practices, a natural product of state legalization that is contradicted by federal enforcement of national anti-marijuana laws. But that is also the reason for the high prices and big profits. In spite of the Tibetan prayer flags, plaster Buddhas, and spiritual books, I have a hard time seeing these latter-day hippies as idealistic paragons of honesty, integrity, and spiritual virtue.

Adam Berkley
Los Angeles, Calif.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.


Anders dresser, made in Vermont. $2399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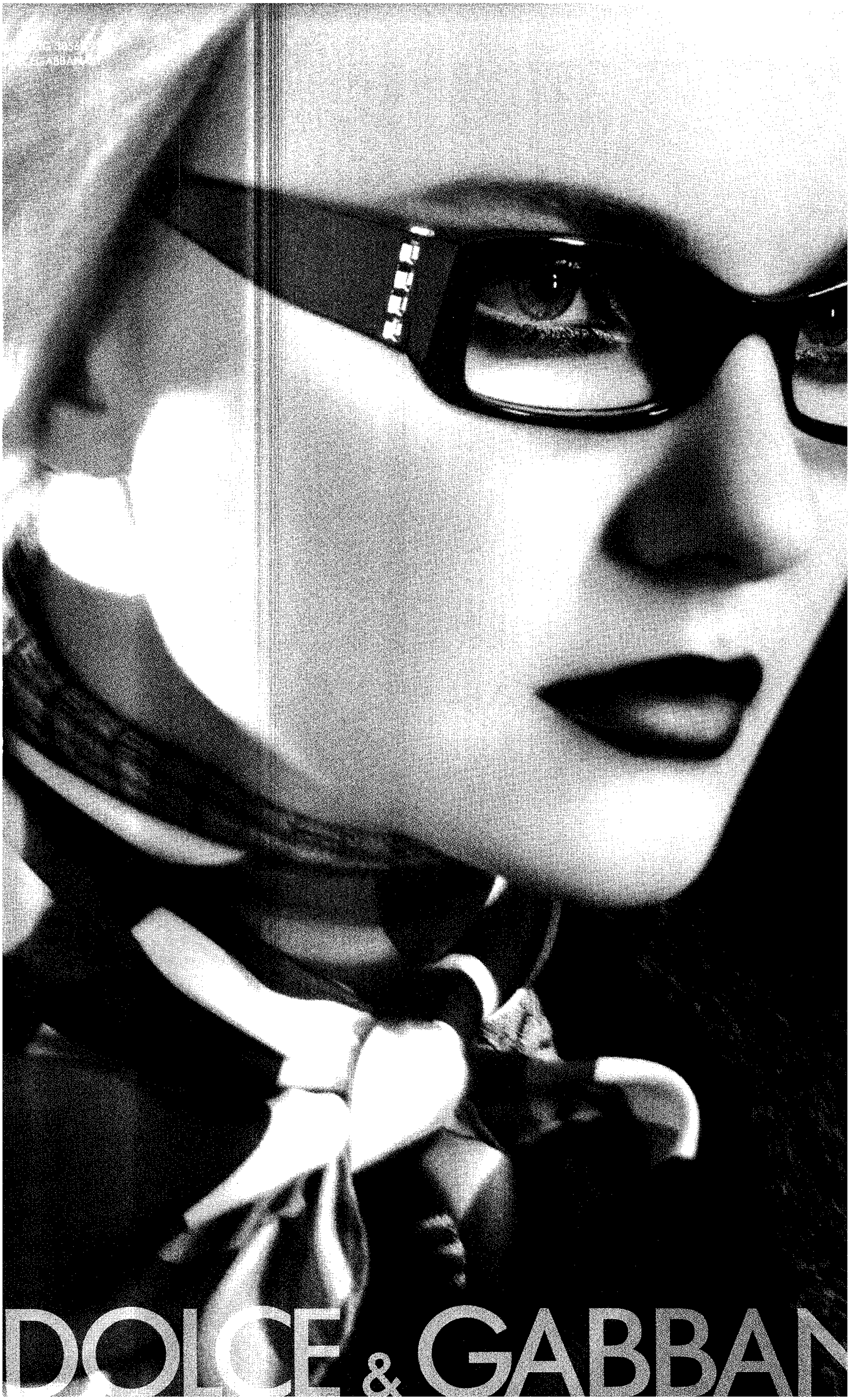
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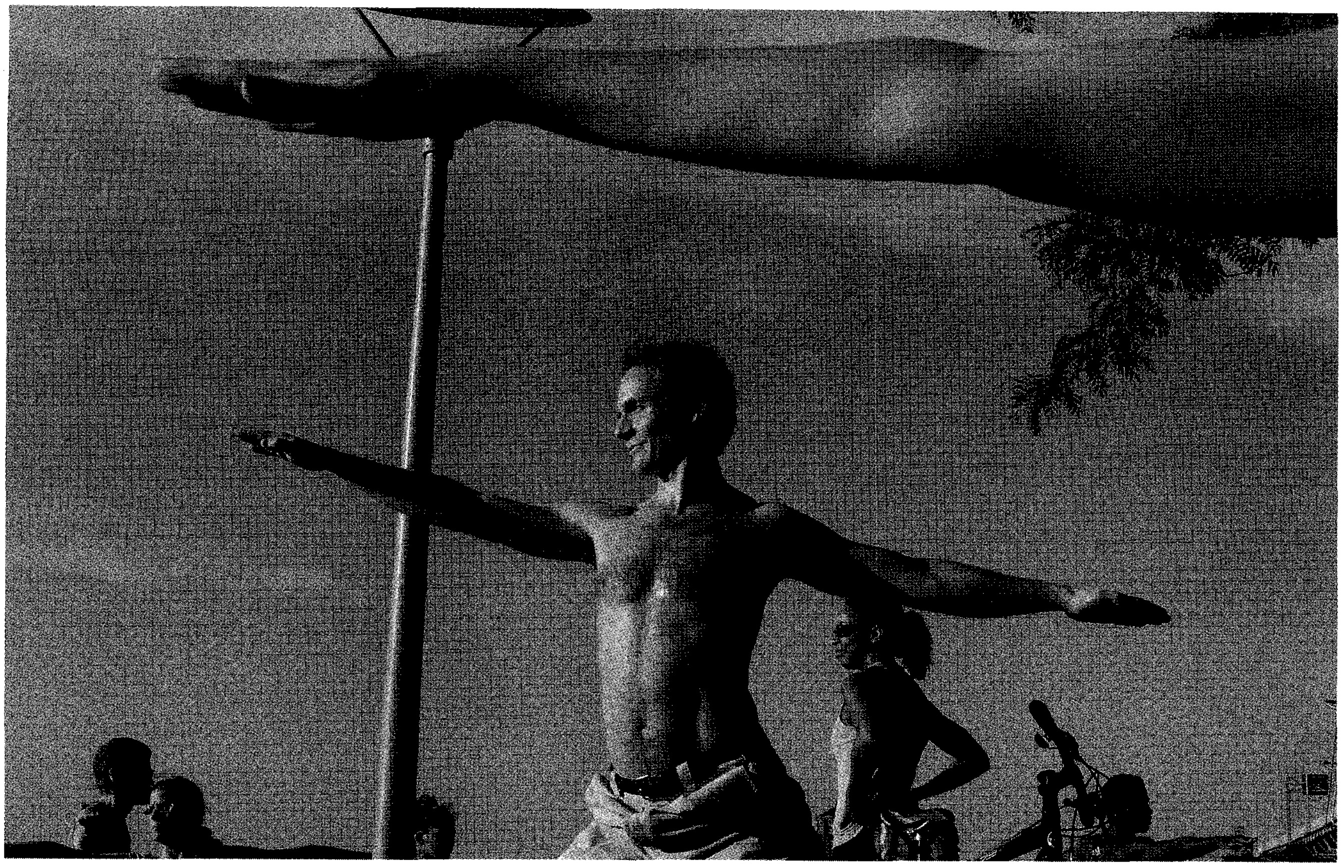

Free yoga at Summer on the Hudson. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
TEXAS TWO-STEP

President Bush and the Iraq war are the subject of the season opener at New York Theatre Workshop. "Beast," a comedy by Michael Weller, centers on two veterans who, upon their release from a military hospital in Germany, travel to the President's Texas ranch. (See page 20.)

NIGHT LIFE
BIG BIRTHDAY

Ten years ago, the renowned local spoken-word artist and singer Carl Hancock Rux was the first performer at Joe's Pub. Over the years, Rux has become a novelist and a playwright; Joe's Pub has thrived, too, presenting night after night of music in a multitude of genres. Rux returns this week to kick off a series of tenth-anniversary celebrations at the club. (See page 27.)

ART
A-LISZT

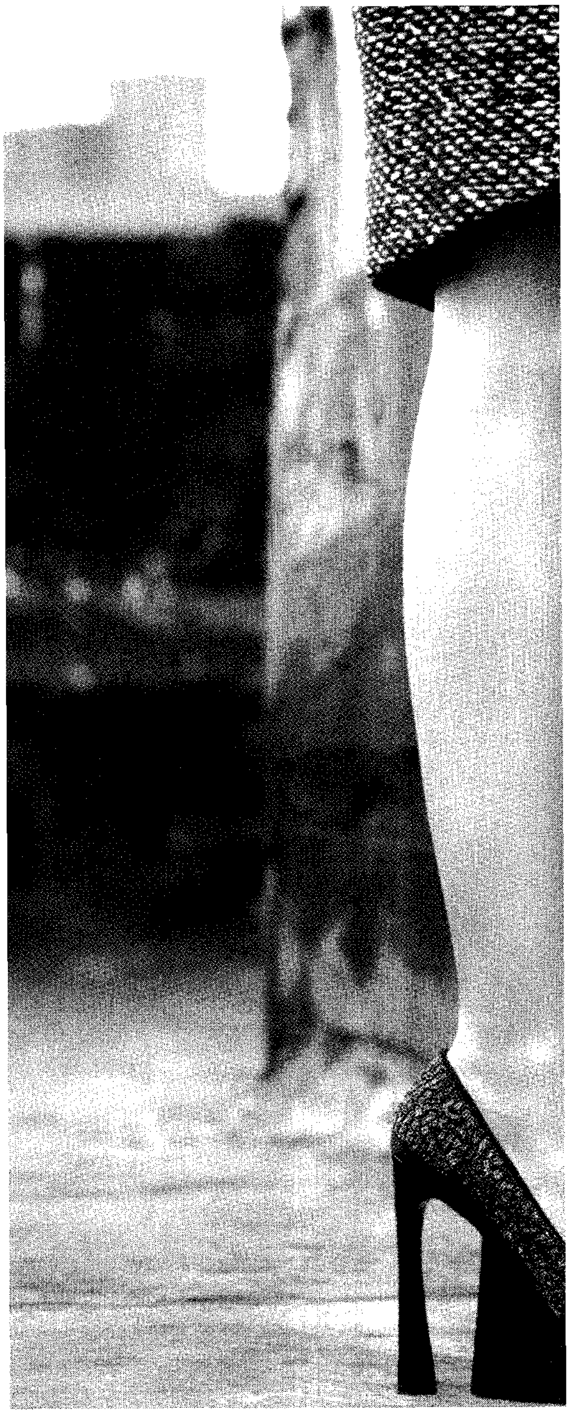
The Austrian-Hungarian pianist-composer Franz Liszt first travelled to Paris—which would later become his home base—as a twelve-year-old prodigy, in 1823. "Liszt in Paris: Enduring Encounters," at the Morgan Library & Museum, documents his years in the City of Light through manuscripts, letters, musical scores, and related material. (See page 32.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
GET OUT OF TOWN

The Finger Lakes region, in upstate New York, is the setting for the Skaneateles Festival, which runs throughout the month of August. The festival's final week features music by Bach, Beethoven, and Stravinsky, performed by some of the country's finest young chamber musicians. (See page 36.)

MOVIES
THE BIBLICAL SENSE

In life as on the screen, Charlton Heston—who died this past April—played big and made like he had friends upstairs. If so, may they look with favor upon this mini-retrospective of Heston's films at Walter Reade, in which he strides through epics set in the distant past ("Ben-Hur"), noirs set in the relative present ("Touch of Evil"), and thrillers set in the dystopian future ("Soylent Green"). (See page 46.)



THE THEATRE • FALL PREVIEW

AKIKO KATO

BOYS IN TIGHTS

"Billy Elliot," the long-awaited musical adaptation of the film about an unlikely aspiring young ballet dancer, which is a hit in London's West End, has music by Elton John and a book and lyrics by Lee Hall. Stephen Daldry directs, at the Imperial (previews begin Oct. 1). ♦ David Lindsay-Abaire wrote the book and the lyrics and Jeanine Tesori wrote the music for "Shrek the Musical," an adaptation of the children's story by William Steig, directed by Jason Moore ("Avenue Q"), at the Broadway Theatre (previews begin Nov. 8). ♦ Stockard Channing, Christian Hoff, and Martha Plimpton star in a revival of "Pal Joey," the Rodgers and Hart musical, with a new book by Richard Greenberg. Joe Mantello directs, at Studio 54 (previews begin Nov. 14).

FRONT OF THE PACK

Daniel Radcliffe, also known as Harry Potter, leads the cast of "Equus," Peter Shaffer's 1974 drama about a disturbed young man and his psychiatrist, at the Broadhurst (previews begin Sept. 5). ♦ "To Be or Not to Be" is Nick Whitby's update of the classic Ernst Lubitsch film comedy, which was also remade by Mel Brooks; Craig Bierko and Jan Maxwell star and Casey Nicholaw directs, at the Samuel J. Friedman (previews begin Sept. 11). ♦ Frank Langella stars in "A Man for All Seasons," Robert Bolt's 1961 account of the life of Sir Thomas More, in a Roundabout production directed by Doug Hughes, at the American Airlines Theatre (previews begin Sept. 12). ♦ Kristin Scott Thomas makes her Broadway début, alongside Peter Sarsgaard, Mackenzie Crook, and Zoe Kazan, in a Royal Court production (seen in London last year) of Chekhov's "The Seagull," directed by Ian Rickson, at the Walter Kerr (previews begin Sept. 16). ♦ "All My Sons," Arthur Miller's 1947 play about a shady Second World War-era businessman, stars John Lithgow, Dianne Wiest, Patrick Wilson, and Katie Holmes, directed by Simon McBurney, at the Schoenfeld (previews begin Sept. 18). ♦ Raúl Esparza, Elisabeth Moss, and Jeremy Piven star in a revival of "Speed-the-Plow," David Mamet's play about the dark side of the film industry, directed by Neil Pepe, at the Barrymore (previews begin Oct. 3).

OFF BROADWAY AND BEYOND

Manhattan Theatre Club premières John Patrick Shanley's musical "Romantic Poetry" (Sept. 30); Doug Hughes directs Beau Willimon's dark election comedy, "Farragut North," at Atlantic Theatre Company (Oct. 22); New York Theatre Workshop presents "The Grand Inquisitor," derived from "The Brothers Karamazov" and directed by Peter Brook (Oct. 22); John Doyle directs the new Stephen Sondheim–John Weidman musical, "Road Show," at the Public (Oct. 28); Playwrights Horizons presents a new play by Craig Lucas, "Prayer for My Enemy," directed by Bartlett Sher (Nov. 14); and the Builders Association presents Marianne Weems's "Continuous City" at BAM (Nov. 18).

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BEAST

New York Theatre Workshop opens its season with a new comedy by Michael Weller, about two Iraq-war veterans who journey to Crawford, Texas, to confront the President. Jo Bonney directs. Previews begin Aug. 29. (79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

FELA!

Bill T. Jones directs and choreographs a new musical about the Nigerian composer, performer, and political activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti. With a book by Jim Lewis and Jones and additional lyrics by Lewis. Kuti's music will be performed by Antibalas. In previews. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-560-8912.)

FRINGENYC ENCORE SERIES

Select Fringe Festival favorites, in repertory at SoHo Playhouse (15 Vandam St.) and at Barrow Street Theatre (27 Barrow St.). Opens Aug. 27. (212-691-1555.)

KING OF SHADOWS

Working Theatre presents the world première of a new play by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, about a teen-age hustler and the social worker who takes him in. Connie Grappo directs. Previews begin Sept. 2. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave. 212-868-4444.)

LADY

Craig Wright's drama, about the reunion of three childhood friends with differing political views, opens the season for the Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre. Dexter Bullard ("Bug") directs. Previews begin Aug. 28. (224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

THE MARVELOUS WONDERETTES

Roger Bean wrote and directs this fifties-era jukebox musical, centered on four girls at their high-school prom. Previews begin Aug. 29. (Westside Theatre, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE QUARREL

David Brandes and Joseph Telushkin adapted their film for this drama, about two estranged friends, both of whom are Holocaust survivors. Previews begin Sept. 2. (DR2, at 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

Jill Santoriello wrote the book, music, and lyrics for this musical adaptation of the Dickens novel. Warren Carlyle directs and choreographs. In previews. (Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THREE CHANGES

Playwrights Horizons kicks off its season with the world première of a play by Nicky Silver, about an Upper West Side couple who get a visit from the husband's Hollywood-based brother. Wilson Milam ("The Lieutenant of Inishmore") directs. Starring Aya Cash, Scott Cohen, Dylan McDermott, Brian J. Smith, and Maura Tierney. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

WHAT'S THAT SMELL: THE MUSIC OF JACOB STERLING

The world première of a musical written and performed by David Pittu ("Is He Dead?"), a satire about a fictional musical-theatre composer, with music by Randy Redd. Previews begin Sept. 2. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSINTHE

The Spiegeltent's headlining event—a raunchy circus full of erotically charged acrobatics and variety acts—returns for its third year. Many of last summer's performers are back, including the Gazillionaire, an impresario with a gold tooth and a giant crotch, and the downtown burlesque sprite Julie Atlas Muz: if you haven't seen her climb full-body into a balloon, now's your chance. Audience members in the first row are likely to be groped by a drunken chanteuse by the name of Kaye Tuckerman. But the evening's most winning performers aren't even of boozing age: the Anastasini brothers, the elder of whom is able to kick the younger (a toothy ten-year-old) in circles like a load of laundry. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17. 212-279-4200.)

ARIAS WITH A TWIST

As show-business survivors go, few are as graceful or as funny as the drag artist and singer Joey Arias. He's a clown, but, like all great clowns, he takes his technique seriously enough to not only control the joke but also make himself the proud brunt of it. In his fast and fascinating new show, conceived with the master puppeteer Basil Twist, Arias has been abducted by aliens, who admire his bustier-clad, high-heeled form. Soon, Arias is released into a kind of psychedelic rain forest, where he eats mushrooms, talks to the audience about his sex life, and performs a ballad. He then reverts to what he has always been: a chanteuse whose side splits and potty mouth may keep him out of the Rainbow Room but will forever win him a place in our hearts. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/7 & 14/08.) (HERE Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

Five actors deftly portray more than thirty different characters in this enjoyable stage adaptation of Jules Verne's 1873 adventure novel about Phileas Fogg (Daniel Stewart), an English gentleman who attempts to circumnavigate the globe in less than three months. The playwright, Mark Brown, has done a polished if not entirely rigorous job with the adaptation, which moves well but can occasionally veer toward the cartoonish. The true wonder in this production lies somewhere between the clever, minimalist direction, by Michael Evan Haney, and the live sound design, by David Andrew Levy, which together manage to evoke the story's many exotic settings with subtlety, economy, and verve—a riveting testament to the ingeniousness of the human imagination, truly in keeping with the spirit of Verne himself. (Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

BOEING-BOEING

In Marc Camoletti's sex farce from 1961, Bernard (Bradley Whitford) is a high-living libertine engaged to three different stewardesses—an American (Kathryn Hahn), an Italian (Gina Gershon), and a German (Mary McCormack). With the help of an air-traffic manual and a droll French maid (Christine Baranski), he keeps them separate, but they inevitably wind up in town on the same day. If farces need to run like clockwork, Camoletti's has more than a few loose pinions. But Matthew Warchus's

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NIGHT LIFE • FALL PREVIEW

ANNETTE MARNAT

LOCAL TERROIR

Wine bars have been popping up all over the city lately, but City Winery (143 Varick St. www.citywinery.com) is different: wine will not only be served in this spacious new SoHo venue; it will also be made there. Those with sufficiently deep pockets can craft their own Cabernet, Pinot Noir, and Riesling in fifty-nine-gallon oak barrels (each yielding more than two hundred bottles), from grapes harvested on the West Coast and elsewhere. The brainchild of the Knitting Factory's founder, Michael Dorf, City Winery will also offer a number of more professionally made vintages, along with a full menu and, of course, cheese.

BROOKLYN BLOOMING

Galapagos Art Space, the grande dame of Williamsburg venues, closed earlier this year to prepare for a move to Dumbo. The new space, complete with an indoor lake, is finally ready, and this month the club will begin presenting a full slate of programming. (16 Main St. 718-222-8500.) ♦ The folks behind Union Hall, a two-year-old bar in Park Slope with a small but popular music space, have had such success with their live rock shows that they are about to open a new venue nearby. The Bell House will have room for more than three hundred patrons. (149 7th St. 718-643-6510.) ♦ Littlefield, which is under construction around the corner from the Bell House and which will hold up to two hundred when it opens, later this year, promises to mix hip-hop and rock shows with offerings of organic wines and microbrewed beer. (622 Degraw St. www.littlefieldnyc.com.)

JAZZ WORLD

Fresh faces are gaining a foothold in the high-end clubs this fall. At the venerable Village Vanguard, Chris Potter, the Bad Plus, Bill McHenry, Anat Cohen, and Jenny Scheinman (with Jason Moran) each have weeklong engagements. Headliners over at the Jazz Standard include Antonio Sanchez; the group Bad Touch, with Loren Stillman; and Moss, featuring Kate McGarry and Theo Bleckmann. Also at the Jazz Standard, Greg Osby fills the room with up-and-comers from his Inner Circle Music record label during a three-day mini-festival. Uptown at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola, the fourth annual Diet Coke Women in Jazz Festival presents a number of female leaders who slip beneath the radar far too often.

CONCERTS

For the "Peace One Day" show, on Sept. 9, Annie Lennox and Bryan Adams serve up acoustic sets at the Nokia Theatre Times Square. The English R. & B. sensation Natasha Bedingfield will join them. ♦ The rapper Ice Cube rolls into the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza on Sept. 21. ♦ The following night, the Southern rebel Steve Earle settles into Judson Memorial Church for a four-night run. ♦ Cesária Évora and Madeleine Peyroux team up at Carnegie Hall on Oct. 3. ♦ The legendary Mexican singer Vincente Fernández headlines at Madison Square Garden on Oct. 4.

---

revival, awash in kitschy mod colors, has enough fizzy ingredients to make up for the script's weak spots. Chief among them is a cast that appears to be having a terrific time, led by the dazzling Mark Rylance as Robert, Bernard's wimpy friend from Wisconsin, who gets caught up in the act. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

BUFFALO GAL

A. R. Gurney's latest, set in his native Buffalo, begins when a Waspy television star (Susan Sullivan, in Katharine Hepburn mode) returns to tread the home-town boards in a regional production of "The Cherry Orchard." The ensuing backstage drama is oddly bloodless; this is really a character study—and a rather plodding one—of a second-rate diva who lacks both the mystery and the acidity of her Chekhovian predecessors. Mark Lamos's musty production does capture a certain small-city lassitude, that feeling of waiting for the circus to come to town. Unfortunately, in Gurney's monochrome portrait, the big moment never arrives. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

DÉSIR

Wayne Harrison's intimately scaled evening of cirque acts doesn't live up to its billing: it's no swoon through the seamy byways of a turn-of-the-century Paris night club. The Boucheron jewels and ab-baring costumes cloak a thinly disguised variety show. Still, some of the acts have real zing. When the four-man acrobat team catapults its smallest member up into the rafters, the front row flinches, and the hula-hoop dancer Marawa Ibrahim shimmies and winks with infectious enthusiasm. Their unbridled brio stands in sharp contrast to the show's unsatisfying attempts at titillation and humor, which feel strangely halfhearted for a louche downtown venue like the Spiegeltent. (South Street Seaport, Pier 17. 212-279-4200.)

EAST 14TH

All hard childhoods have their funny moments, but few such childhoods are hilarious. Yet the audience can't stop laughing as Don Reed, in his one-man show, acts out the story of his dicey coming-of-age in an Oakland ghetto in the nineteen-seventies. Reed plays all the characters—his father, a hard-partying pimp; his stepfather, an abusive religious fanatic; his flamboyantly gay brother; and all manner of women, including his lost, sad mother—with both ease and inexhaustible energy. It's hard to imagine that the awkward kid who came up through such crude circumstances could be the confident man who wrote, directed, and stars in this play, as much standup as it is theatre, and yet that's Reed's point: that East 14th was not just a street in Oakland but a path that formed a decent man. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

ELIZABETH REX

Joanne Zipay directs this drama by Timothy Findley, about Queen Elizabeth's decision to execute the Earl of Essex. Presented by Nicu's Spoon. (Center Stage, 48 W. 21st St. 212-352-3101.)

THE FIRST BREEZE OF SUMMER

Signature Theatre Company presents Leslie Lee's drama from 1975. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs; Leslie Uggams stars. (Reviewed in this issue.) (555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

GYPSY

The 1959 musical—with music by Jule Styne and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, under the deft direction of Arthur Laurents, who also wrote the book—burnishes the legend of the hard-driving Momma Rose. Thrilling from the moment she stalks onstage, the big-voiced and big-hearted Patti LuPone plays Momma Rose more as a terrier than as a bitch. Whether Rose is showing her erstwhile suitor Herbie (the appealing Boyd Gaines) some leg, plying a manager of the Orpheum Circuit with Chinese food, or tiptoeing upstage to shift the scenery, LuPone is a delusional whirlwind whose innate humor manages to humanize the toxic termagant. As Gypsy, the piquant Laura Benanti is revealed in all her statuesque aplomb; her body is showstopping, but, as with Gypsy Rose Lee herself, what makes the whole package work is Benanti's alluring combination of reserve and wit. (4/7/08) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

HAIR: THE AMERICAN TRIBAL LOVE ROCK MUSICAL

Since it stormed the Public Theatre, in 1967, James Rado, Gerome Ragni, and Galt MacDermot's musical has become as much of a cultural artifact as the mood ring, so it's a daunting show to revive. Diane Paulus's production succeeds by keeping the highs high—try to resist Will Swenson, as Berger, climbing over your seat in a fringed loincloth—but even more so by tapping into the core of ambivalence that makes "Hair" more than a hippie Renaissance fair. By the time the audience is invited to rush the stage for "Let the Sun Shine In," we know what's fuelling this far-out dance party: the dread, the heartache, and the terror-stricken defiance of the draft-card era. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park, near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

HAMLET

Gorilla Rep presents a free production of the Shakespeare tragedy on the Cloisters Lawn, in Fort Tryon Park. Christopher Carter Sanderson directs. (190th St. at Broadway. For more information, visit www.gorillarep.org. Through Aug. 31.)

IN THE HEIGHTS

In this musical, which focusses on life in the largely Hispanic Washington Heights section of upper Manhattan, Lin-Manuel Miranda (who also wrote the music and the lyrics) stars as Usnavi, an altogether adorable owner of a bodega, who can't seem to connect with women, unlike his best friend, the infinitely more manly Benny (Christopher Jackson), who loves Nina (Mandy Gonzales). Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes (who wrote the book) have rendered a simple and not at all offensive world, and have brought little that is new to the familiar Broadway spectacle of earnest, smiling immigrants singing and dancing for our delectation. (3/31/08) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

LIFE IN A MARITAL INSTITUTION

James Braly's wry hour-long monologue interweaves the story of his twenty-year marriage with scenes from a hospice, where his sister is preparing to marry her ne'er-do-well boyfriend before she dies. The juxtaposition reveals a lifetime of relationship mayhem, and Braly presents it winningly, with a keen sense of the absurdity of everyone's eccentricities. Yet, while Braly is free with embarrassing details, he's less comfortable with introspection; he's happy to share his horror at

TOD'S
MADE IN ITALY

his wife's freezing their son's placenta and her breast-feeding their four- and six-year-old boys, but how he ended up in such a situation remains mysterious to the audience, and, perhaps, to Braly himself. Directed by Hal Brooks. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555. Through Aug. 31.)

THE MARRIAGE OF BETTE AND BOO
Christopher Durang's 1985 play (in a Roundabout Theatre Company revival, at the Laura Pels) is divided into thirty-three pointed scenes, following the marriage of Bette Brennan (Kate Jennings Grant) and Boo Hudlocke (the understated Christopher Evan Welch). In the years after their wedding, Bette and Boo have a child, Matt (Charles Socarides), who announces the titles of the scenes and sometimes amusingly narrates what the characters are doing in the pauses between them. Grant and Welch couldn't be more grating, or more touching, which is as it should be. But Walter Bobbie's direction of the supporting cast is strange: rather than look for the emotion beneath Durang's absurdism, he has his actors competing to accentuate the ridiculousness. (7/28/08) (111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

The Czech photographer Josef Koudelka's exhibition "Invasion 68 Prague" opens at Aperture on Sept. 4.

MAGNUM

NOON DAY SUN
Diverse City Theatre Company presents a drama by Cassandra Medley, about a black woman living as a white woman. Victor Lirio directs. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SOUTH PACIFIC
Under the elegant, astute direction of Bartlett Sher, this revival—the first on Broadway since the show's début—is a majestic spectacle. The 1949 musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, adapted from James Michener's "Tales of the South Pacific," conjures the Second World War and the lush corner of the globe where the Navy Seabees of the saga found themselves waiting to engage the Japanese. The plot involves a romance between Emile de Becque (Paulo Szot), a widowed French plantation owner who is the father of mixed-race children, and Ensign Nellie Forbush (Kelli O'Hara), a self-confessed "hick" from Little Rock. O'Hara puts a fine shine on the role of Nellie, but she's too classy and too knowing to fit the idiosyncratic comic contours of the role. The Brazilian Szot is superb, with a resounding creamy bass voice and a warm masculine presence. But, in the end, the score is the incontrovertible star. (4/14/08) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

[TITLE OF SHOW]
A meta-musical about two guys trying to write a musical may sound suspect, but the result, with a book by Hunter Bell and music and lyrics by Jeff Bowen, who also star, turns out to be a joy from start to finish—original, clever, and surprisingly moving. Bell and Bowen, joined by their actress friends (and now co-stars) Susan Blackwell and Heidi Blickenstaff, create a musical in three weeks and submit it to a festival; brainstorming sessions, foulmouthed pep talks, jokes about drag-queen names and Broadway flops, and an in-song argument about whether "sweeter" rhymes with "theatre" all make it into the show, as does each new chapter in its progression from idea to possible hit. That we know the ending—we're watching it on Broadway—only heightens the fun. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BAY STREET THEATRE
Marcia Milgrom Dodge directs "Ain't Misbehavin'," the Fats Waller musical revue by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr., through Aug. 31. For more information, visit www.baystreet.org. (Sag Harbor, N.Y. 631-725-9500.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Rhoda Lerman's drama "Eleanor: Her Secret Journey," directed by Stephen Temperley, plays at the Unicorn. "Noël Coward in Two Keys," Coward's final play, continues on the Main Stage through Aug. 30. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. (Stockbridge, Mass. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
"Cymbeline" (closing Aug. 30) plays on the tented outdoor stage at Boscobel in repertory with "Twelfth Night" (closing Aug. 31) and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)." For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

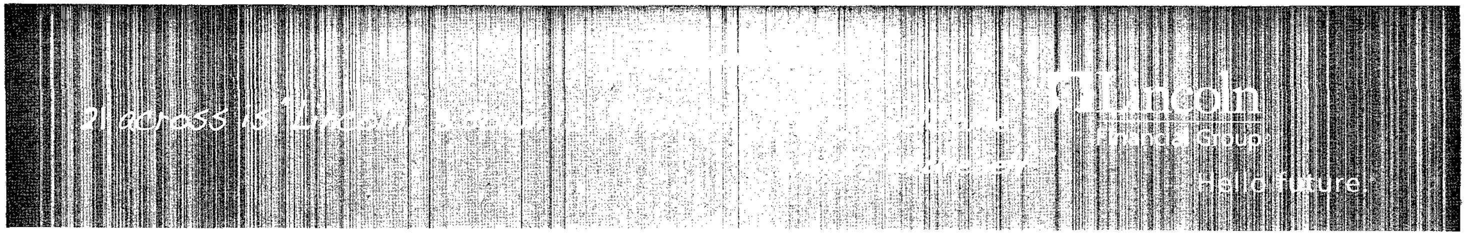
Also Playing

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY: Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE FANTASTICKS:** Snapple Theatre Center, 210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100. **FUERZABRUTA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E. 212-239-6200. **GREASE:** Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **LEGALLY BLONDE THE MUSICAL:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **THE LITTLE MERMAID:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-307-4100. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 39 STEPS:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

06/01/2008

August 12, 2038

I can still picture us standing there like it was yesterday. Among all the things going through my mind that day, the thought of needing to meet with someone to get solid financial advice for our future still stands out. An epiphany? whatever it was, I'm just thankful it happened. Because the last two years of being happily retired feel almost as good as the past 30 years of being happily married. People always say your wedding is the most special day of your life. Little did I know at the time just how right they were.



The Crossword Challenge Series

Up for a new challenge? Here's one to get your futureself dreaming—about all things stylish.

Lincoln Financial Group presents the third in a series of six individually themed crosswords appearing in the magazine through November 2008, that you can solve and mail in or enter online at www.futuresweeps.com. Complete any of the four remaining crosswords correctly, and be entered to win a Nikon Coolpix S550 10.0 megapixel digital camera with 5x optical zoom and 2.5" LCD display (value: $229.95). One winner will be selected for each of the six crossword challenges.

Correctly complete any of the Lincoln Financial crosswords this year, and you'll qualify to win the Grand Prize—an Undiscovered Italy™ premium villa vacation. (Complete *all* puzzles correctly, and increase your chances of winning! One entry per challenge per household, please.) Grand Prize includes round-trip airfare for two, car rental, and a $2,000 credit toward an unforgettable luxury stay at Parker Villas in regions such as Tuscany, Umbria, Piedmont, Liguria, or Puglia (total value: $4,500).

To enter, mail in your solution by **midnight, September 22nd,** to:
The Lincoln Financial Group Crossword Challenge, c/o The New Yorker Promotion Department,
attn: "Lincoln Financial," 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036, or enter online at www.futuresweeps.com.

Visit Web site for complete contest rules, and again after September 29th for this puzzle's solution.

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13				■	14			
15			16					■	17			
■	■	18			■	19		20		■	■	■
21	22				23		■	24		25	26	27
28			■	29			30		■	31		
32			■	■	33			■	■	34		
35			■	36				37	■	38		
39			40		■	41			42			
■	■	■	43		44		■	45			■	■
46	47	48		■	49		50				51	52
53				■	54				■	55		
56				■	57				■	58		

ACROSS

1. Wedding dress shade, __-white
4. Swanky digs descriptor
8. Lactic, glycolic, or salicylic peels
12. Louis XIV, par exemple
13. Twin brother of Jacob
14. "Rus in ___" (from Latin meaning urban retreat)
15. Always-in-style building material
17. Healthy lifestyle components, ___ and exercise
18. Tip to "omatic" (self-evident)
19. "__, _really, really do!" (animated altar vow)
21. The "L" in LF
24. 2008 marks the 50th anniversary of music style meaning "new trend," ___nova
28. List-ending abbr.
29. A "Dynamic" twist on architecture will be built here and in Moscow
31. Good times
32. Cocktail made with rum and curaçao, __ tai
33. Swiss river to the Rhine (var. sp.)
34. Peach or plum part
35. "Pay" suffix ('50s scandal that rocked rock)
36. Champagne flute shape
38. Previously, to a poet
39. Bride's tulle veil, made from silk or __
41. Wedding cake tier-placer, say
43. Metallics fashion trend: The symbol for the element of silver _ "_"
45. GPS measure, for short
46. Enamel-coated milk holder, for one
49. Cyborg creativity: 2 wds.
53. "Stil" add-on (Make this high heel whole again!)
54. Nell __ (17th-c. English actress and mistress of King Charles II)
55. Informal endearment
56. Ergo
57. Wallet's small bills
58. French article

DOWN

1. Tolkien ogre
2. Egg __ yong
3. The "F" in LF
4. Vintage vestment = __ piece, perhaps
5. Suffix with "sucr"
6. Designer's gala-wear creation: 3 wds.
7. Richly-__ (fall fashions, often)
8. Dubbed "haute couture for the ear," it's ___ sensory branding, a.k.a. music styling
9. Dernier __ (French: the last word)
10. "May _ _ of service?" (boutique query, perhaps)
11. Investigator, for short
16. 190 to ancient Romans
20. Kimono sash
21. __ wedge can serve as iced-tea garnish
22. Where Umbria and Puglia are
23. Leis are the fashion here
25. Skyscraper category of The Freedom Tower and #26-Down
26. It will overlook Lake Michigan, The Chicago __
27. Fall flower
30. Operatic solo
36. Heavy weights abbr., perhaps
37. Bridge's architectural towers
40. Gallerist's jargon, _ _ canvas: 2 wds.
42. __, drink, and be merry!
44. In Greek mythology, ship that sailed to Colchis
46. For fashionably furry friends, "__-à-porter"
47. __-leisure (industry buzzword for comfy footwear)
48. "Social" suffix
50. "Catch you later!"
51. __ du Faubourg Saint-Honoré (fashionable street in Paris)
52. LCD HDs, e.g.

THE LINCOLN FINANCIAL GROUP CROSSWORD CHALLENGE RULES AND REGULATIONS
NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.

1. This challenge starts August 25, 2008, 12:01 A.M. ET, and ends 12:00 A.M. ET, September 22, 2008. Each individual crossword contest will last a month from issue newsstand date.
2. Contestants may enter the contest by correctly completing and submitting the Lincoln Financial Group crossword via mail, or by submitting a photocopy thereof found in the September 1, 2008, issue of *The New Yorker*. Contestants must include name, address, telephone, and e-mail address in the envelope addressed to The New Yorker Promotion Department, attn: "Lincoln Financial," 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036. Contestants may also enter online at www.futuresweeps.com.
3. Prize description as noted above or visit www.futuresweeps.com for more information.
4. One camera will be given away for each of the series' six crossword challenges.
5. This sweepstakes (the "Promotion") is only open to legal residents of the 50 United States and the District of Columbia who are at least 18 years old as of the date of entry, except officers, directors, members, and employees of the Sponsor, the judging organization (if applicable), or any other party associated with the development or administration of this Promotion, and their immediate family (i.e., parents, children, siblings, spouse), and persons residing in the same household as such individuals. Lincoln Financial Group affiliates and their respective employees/representatives are not eligible to win prizes from this sweepstakes. This Promotion is void outside the 50 United States and the District of Columbia, and where prohibited.
6. One entry per challenge per household for each of the six Lincoln Financial Group Crossword contests.
7. For complete contest rules, visit www.futuresweeps.com, and again after September 29th for puzzle solution.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Sept. 1: **Chicha Libre,** something of a local supergroup, includes the *cuatro* player and vocalist Olivier Conan (a member of Las Rubias del Norte and also one of the owners of this bar), the keyboardist Joshua Camp (of One Ring Zero), the bassist Nicholas Cudahy (formerly of Combustible Edison), and the guitarist Vincent Douglas (of Bébé Eiffel, and another Barbès owner). They start with South American *chicha* music (an electrified take on the folkloric genre *cumbia* that dates back some thirty years) and add psychedelic touches, surf rock, and extended improvisations.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 27: **Steve Lukather,** one of the founding members of Toto (best remembered for "Hold the Line," "Rosanna," and other hits from the late seventies and early eighties), is a genuine guitar whiz and a sought-after session player who has worked with everyone from Randy Newman to Spinal Tap. Toto broke up earlier this year (believe it or not, they lasted that long), and Lukather is currently touring to promote his new solo album, "Ever Changing Times." Aug. 30: **The Motels Featuring Martha Davis.** The Motels found fame in the early eighties with such slow-burning ballads (and MTV staples) as "Only the Lonely" and "Suddenly Last Summer." The sultry vocalist Davis closed down the Motels in 1987, but she has since put together a new incarnation of the band.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 28: **Xiu Xiu,** purveyors of über-complex post-punk songs. Aug. 30: The aggressive British synth-rock ensemble **Does It Offend You, Yeah?** is currently opening for Nine Inch Nails (see the Izod Center). Here they get to play headliner, and it's a role they're more than ready for.

FILLMORE NEW YORK AT IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 31: **Burning Spear.** Winston Rodney has been one of reggae's prime Rasta prophets for decades. His mid-seventies masterworks, "Marcus Garvey" and "Dry and Heavy," preached the importance of self-knowledge and positive thinking, punctuated by insistent, insinuating grooves. He's a passionate performer, and his concerts are always excellent. Sept. 2: Florida's **Underoath** is ostensibly a Christian-rock band, but it is a million stylistic miles from the staid likes of Stryper and Amy Grant. It borrows liberally from emo and grindcore, playing relentlessly feral rock capable of sating the faithful and the godless alike, provided they enjoy high-decibel screaming.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Aug. 30: **Richard Marx,** the former big-haired darling of eighties mainstream rock, made radio-ready hits and earnest ballads that scored him high sales but few critical accolades. Marx continues to perform the songs that made him famous, including "Don't Mean Nothing," "Hold On to the Nights," and "Right Here Waiting," along with more contemporary fare.

IZOD CENTER
The Meadowlands, New Jersey (212-307-7171)—Aug. 27: The **Nine Inch Nails** front man Trent Reznor earned his angry place among alternative-rock royalty by combining the malice of industrial music and the accessibility of mainstream pop. The band is a study in contrasts. It's hugely successful (playing unabashedly corporate venues like this one, formerly the Brendan Byrne Arena) and yet it still pushes the envelope, both with its music and with its approach to the business. Reznor recently offered the band's new effort, "The Slip," as a free download, and he has exhorted his fans to steal music instead of buying CDs. With **Does It Offend You, Yeah?** (See the Bowery Ballroom.)

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 28: The Texas-based songwriter and painter **Tom Russell** keeps the artistic company of Charles Bukowski, outsider poets, carnival freaks, and the like. Sept. 1: The singer, novelist, and playwright **Carl Hancock Rux** performs excerpts from his new cabaret opera, "Blackamoor Angel," about a mixed-race theatre troupe in Weimar-era Berlin.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Aug. 29: The **Figgs,** who achieved a small measure of renown for being Graham Parker's backing band for a few tours, play a sharp version of three-chord pop punk. Aug. 30: Following weeks of regional competitions, the country's finest d.j.s hit the decks for the **2008 DMC USA Finals.** The winner goes on to represent America at the DMC World Finals, in London, next month.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Sept. 2: The **Low Anthem,** a scruffy folk-rock band out of Providence, Rhode Island, celebrates the release of its new album, "Oh My God, Charlie Darwin."

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Aug. 27: **Caithlin De Marrais,** a Brooklyn-based singer-songwriter and the former lead singer for Rainer Maria. With, among other acts, **Balthrop, Alabama,** an expansive local folk-rock collective led by the singer, songwriter, and guitarist Pascal Balthrop and his sister Lauren, a vocalist and keyboardist. They grew up singing gospel and pop tunes with their family in Mobile, Alabama, and now the pair and their band play paeans to the lovelorn and the droll. Aug. 28: The Boston-based power trio **Tab the Band,** with a fixation on seventies arena rock, lights up the night with the fist-pumping sounds of its new record, "Long Weekend."

MUSIC HALL OF WILLIAMSBURG
66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn (718-486-5400)—Aug. 28: The **Gourds.** Despite being dubbed the inheritors of the Texas sound by the Lone Star legend Doug Sahm (no small feat in Austin, a city brimming with talent), the Gourds have a sensibility that's decidedly different from that of the late honky-tonk and blues master. The group may share Sahm's affinity for raucous accordion

ART • FALL PREVIEW

KYLE T. WEBSTER

PAINTING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE PAINTING
In 1927, Joan Miró wrote, "I want to assassinate painting." MOMA's "Joan Miró: Painting and Anti-Painting, 1927-1937" is the first exhibition to focus on the decade of radical transformation in the Spanish artist's work. Opens Nov. 2. ♦ The Italian painter Giorgio Morandi took a more contemplative approach to the medium, and his near-monochrome still-lifes of bottles and jars are quiet masterpieces. The Metropolitan Museum surveys the reclusive artist's œuvre in "Giorgio Morandi, 1890-1964." Opens Sept. 16. ♦ In its second season on the Bowery, the New Museum mounts two shows by painters based in New York. Mary Heilman's breezy geometric abstractions go on view in "To Be Someone," opening Oct. 22, and Elizabeth Peyton's lapidary portraits of muses and friends are the subject of a mid-career retrospective, opening Oct. 8.

EXTRA-ORDINARY
The Memphis-born photographer William Eggleston, who is widely credited with legitimatizing both color photography and the snapshot aesthetic, once told a reporter, "I am at war with the obvious." For five decades, he has uncovered the beauty in the mundane, be it a gas-station pump, the inside of an oven, or a dog lapping at a puddle. Beginning Nov. 7, the Whitney Museum traces the evolution of his work (including the cult video "Stranded in Canton," from 1974) in "William Eggleston: Democratic Camera, Photographs and Video, 1961-2008."

FOND FAREWELL
The Met's peerless director, Philippe de Montebello, is stepping down at the end of the year, and the museum's curators are sending him off with a show of some three hundred works chosen from the more than eighty-four thousand acquired during his thirty-one-year tenure. The objects range from a Mesopotamian copper demon made circa 3000 B.C. to a Rubens self-portrait with his wife and son, painted in the late sixteen-thirties, to a guitar, made by Herman Hauser in 1937, that was once owned by Andrés Segovia. Opens Oct. 24.

THE MORE THE MERRIER
Two museum shows this fall focus on teamwork. The Brooklyn Museum presents a three-decade survey of Gilbert & George, the British duo best known for their bold color photographs arranged in large grids, which touch on provocative themes of love, loss, and urban life. Opens Oct. 3. ♦ In "Theanyspacewhatever," the Guggenheim invites ten frequent collaborators (Maurizio Cattelan, Pierre Huyghe, and Rirkrit Tiravanija among them) to exhibit works that reflect on the artists' shared history. In addition to sculptures, installations, films, sound pieces, and live performances, the show sports a revolving hotel room, conceived by the Stockholm-based artist Carsten Höller, in the rotunda. It accommodates overnight guests (breakfast included) who register on the museum's Web site. Opens Oct. 24.

breakdowns and countrified rock, but they channel those influences into a whimsical style that's all their own.

(LE) POISSON ROUGE
158 Bleecker St. (212-796-0741)—Aug. 28: **Lykke Li,** an up-and-coming singer from Sweden with a breathy technique and a winning way. Sept. 2: Some thirty years ago, **Lou Reed** helped define the lexicon of noise with his album "Metal Machine Music." Here he teams up with his fellow downtown denizen **John Zorn** for continued exploration of the genre. Zorn's label Tzadik recently released "The Stone: Issue Three," a live album recorded at Zorn's East Village room, featuring improvised soundscapes by Zorn, Reed, and Laurie Anderson. Reed, for his part, is just back from a European tour performing his 1973 concept album "Berlin," and his performance of that album at St. Ann's Warehouse, two years ago, has been turned into a film by Julian Schnabel.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Aug. 31: The French guitarist **Stephane Wrembel** picks up where Django Reinhardt left off.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 27-30: The lauded Brazilian singer **Leny Andrade** toasts her native composers as she celebrates fifty years of bossa nova. Sundays: **Chico O'Farrill's Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra.** The late arranger and bandleader O'Farrill was one of the grand architects of Afro-Cuban jazz. His son Arturo, who is a persuasive pianist in his own right, keeps up his dad's deft balance of steaming Latin rhythms, fervid bop improvisation, and resonant horn charts. Tuesdays: **David Berger & The Sultans of Swing** revisit the work of Ellington, Basie, and other giants of the big-band era.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 28-31: The Israeli bassist **Avishai Cohen** is a dazzling player with a range of Middle Eastern musical influences. Here he leads a trio with the pianist **Shai Maestro** and the drummer **Mark Giuliana.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 27-31: **Roy Haynes & Fountain of Youth.** Haynes is decades older than his sidemen, but the octogenarian drum legend can still make the younger musicians sweat. Employing a style that's both classic and eccentric, and eschewing nostalgia of any sort, Haynes is an in-the-moment phenomenon.

DROM
85 Avenue A (212-777-1157)—Aug. 27: A guitar monster who has never forgotten the primacy of the groove, **Charlie Hunter** fronts a trio featuring **Erik Deutsch,** on keyboards, and **Tony Mason,** on drums.

HIGHLINE BALLROOM
431 W. 16th St. (212-414-5994)—Aug. 29: **Cecil Taylor.** An atypical venue for an atypical pianist. Half a century after first turning heads with his alternative vision of jazz, Taylor is still no average improviser; his determination to remain true to himself is as inspiring to his fans as it is daunting to the uninitiated.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 28-31: The **Teddy Charles** band. Charles, an adventurous vibraphonist who for years has kept himself in the shadows (working with everyone from Miles Davis to Aretha Franklin), is now stepping out into the spotlight.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 26-28: The **Ted Nash** quartet. The saxophonist Nash and a strong contingent of dependable associates, including the pianist **Frank Kimbrough,** salute the music of Henry Mancini. Aug. 29-31: The **Larry Willis** quintet. The most persuasive elements of sixties modal bop can still be found in the work of the veteran pianist Willis. Like some of his similarly rejuvenated peers, he has retained his energy and unearthed new depths of meaning in his improvisations. His quintet is anchored by a vital rhythm section made up of the bassist **Buster Williams** and the drummer **Louis Hayes.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 28: The Brooklyn-based composer and bassist **Todd Sickafoose** has studied with Charlie Haden and he tours with Ani DiFranco. Sickafoose seamlessly embraces avant-jazz and indie-rock sensibilities, and he's here to celebrate his third album, "Tiny Resistors," a collection of lush compositions that evoke the fragility of the world: it's part elegy, part hopeful reflection.

SMALLS
183 W. 10th St. (212-252-5091)—Aug. 28: A deep-into-the-night engagement at this intimate venue. The pianist **Ehud Asherie** performs duets with the neo-swing trumpeter **Jon-Erik Kellso.** They're followed by the drummer **Billy Hart** and his quartet, featuring the saxophonist **Mark Turner** and the pianist **Ethan Iverson.** The bassist **Ari Roland's** trio caps the night with a jam session.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 26-31: **Kenny Barron,** the dean of mainstream pianists, presents a new quartet featuring the saxophonist **Dana Stevens.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

JOHN RITTER

DVD NOTES
FALL CLASSICS

Criterion releases a trio of exquisite nineteen-fifties literary adaptations by Max Ophüls: **"The Earrings of Madame de . . . ,"** from a novel by Louise de Vilmorin; **"La Ronde,"** based on Arthur Schnitzler's play; and **"Le Plaisir,"** featuring three stories by Guy de Maupassant (Sept. 16).

Musicals, pre- and postwar, are coming from Warner Home Video: **"The Busby Berkeley Collection Volume 2,"** featuring the manic "Hollywood Hotel," from 1937, and two-disk special editions of Vincente Minnelli's **"An American in Paris,"** from 1951, and **"Gigi,"** from 1958, both starring Leslie Caron (Sept. 16).

Paramount delivers a four-disk Blu-Ray release and a five-disk standard DVD issue of Francis Ford Coppola's **"Godfather"** trilogy, with newly remastered films and a rogues' gallery of extras (Sept. 23).

One of the high points of the silent-film era, F. W. Murnau's **"The Last Laugh,"** from 1924, starring Emil Jannings as a hotel doorman forced into retirement, returns in a two-disk set from Kino that includes a restoration of the original German version as well as the cut that was released for export (Sept. 30).

Uninhibited streetwise animation returns in the third **"Popeye the Sailor"** boxed set, from Warner Home Video, featuring cartoons from 1941-43, including stereotype-filled Second World War propaganda cartoons (Sept. 30).

Disney's 1959 classic **"Sleeping Beauty,"** shot in 70-mm., returns to DVD in a two-disk fiftieth-anniversary edition (Oct. 7).

Crime does pay when the director Jean-Pierre Melville takes it on. Criterion offers his neoclassical work **"Le Doulos,"** from 1962, and **"Le Deuxième Souffle,"** a chilly late masterwork (Oct. 7).

"The Alfred Hitchcock Premier Collection" (M-G-M) includes "Notorious," "Spellbound," "Rebecca," and "The Lodger," the Master's first mystery, from 1926, based on the story of Jack the Ripper (Oct. 14).

Four of Hammer Studios' definitively campy British horror movies of the nineteen-sixties arrive in **"Icons of Horror 3"** (Sony), three of which star Christopher Lee: "The Gorgon," "The Two Faces of Dr. Jekyll," and "Scream of Fear" (Oct. 14).

The great directors Kenji Mizoguchi and Jean-Marie Straub have long been underrepresented on home video. Criterion Eclipse will issue a four-disk box, **"Kenji Mizoguchi's Fallen Women,"** which includes two prewar dramas, "Osaka Elegy" and "Sisters of the Gion," and two later masterpieces, "Women of the Night" and "Street of Shame," his last film. New Yorker Films is releasing **"Moses and Aaron,"** Straub and Danièle Huillet's 1975 adaptation of Schoenberg's opera (Oct. 21).

New Yorker Films offers the South Korean director Hong Sang-soo's self-excoriating melodrama, **"Woman on the Beach"**—whose title is borrowed from Jean Renoir's 1947 classic (Oct. 28).

"Little Rascals: The Complete Collection" (Genius Products), a precious Depression document, includes all eighty of the "Our Gang" comedies made between 1929 and 1938 (Oct. 28).

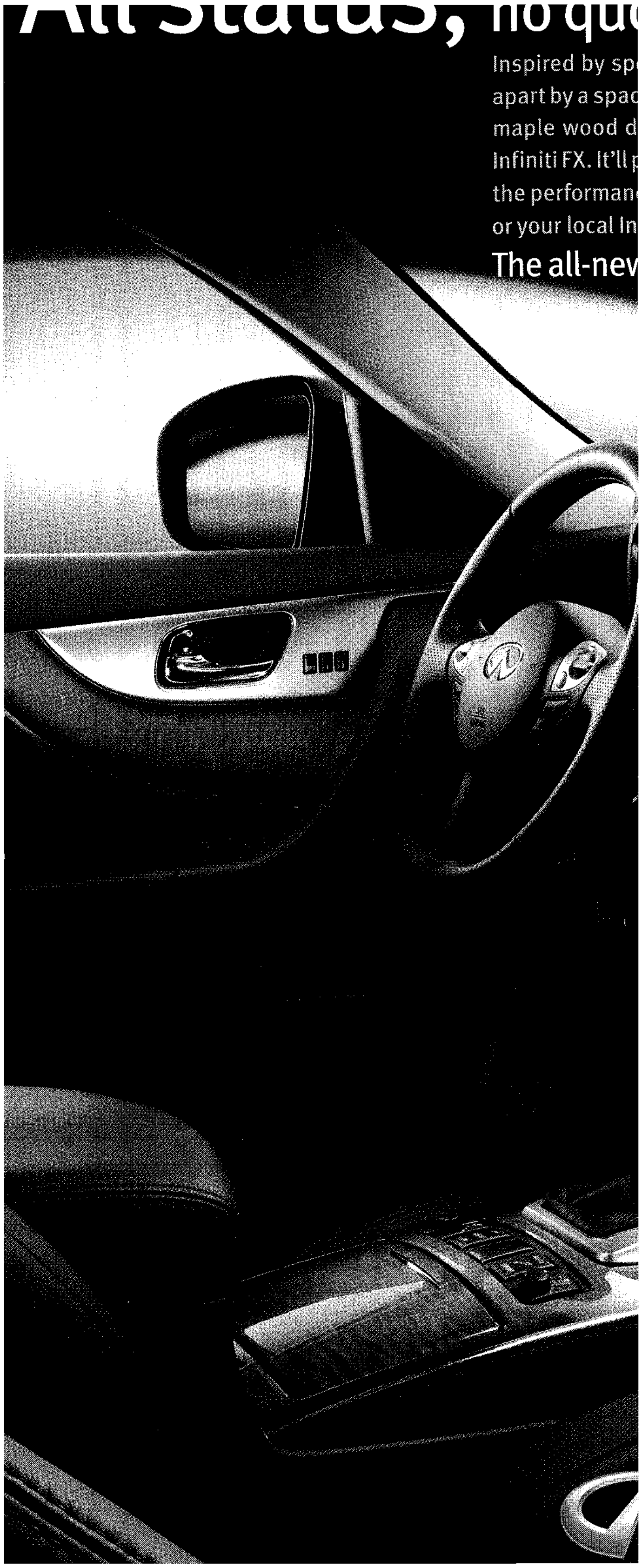
The week after Election Day, Warner Home Video will release **"JFK (Ultimate Collector's Edition),"** featuring the director's cut of Oliver Stone's 1991 drama and a host of extras covering everything from conspiracy to Camelot. **"The Cosby Show: 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition"** (First Look) features all eight seasons, from 1984 through 1992; the set's contents run 4,569 minutes—more than seventy-six hours (Nov. 11).

Irreverence arrives in time for Christmas, in the **"Monty Python Holy Trinity"** set (Sony), featuring "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," "Monty Python's Life of Brian," and "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life" (Nov. 18).

—*Richard Brody*

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"J. M. W. Turner."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Art of the Royal Court: Treasures in Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Superheroes: Fashion and Fantasy."** Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Framing a Century: Master Photographs, 1840-1940"** uses works from the Met's collection by twelve men (including Gustave Le Gray, Carleton Watkins, Nadar, Walker Evans, and Brassaï) and one woman (Julia Margaret Cameron) to sketch a history of photography's first hundred years. Though the concept may be reductive, the exhibition is not. The curator Malcolm Daniel's selection is as sophisticated as it is instructive; each "master" is represented by a group of familiar and little-known images that suggest the artist's depth and range. Wall labels direct our attention to technical developments in the medium, but the real subject here is vision: an eye for both ordinary and extraordinary beauty, from William Henry Fox Talbot's delicate 1868 study of dandelion seeds to Man Ray's nineteen-



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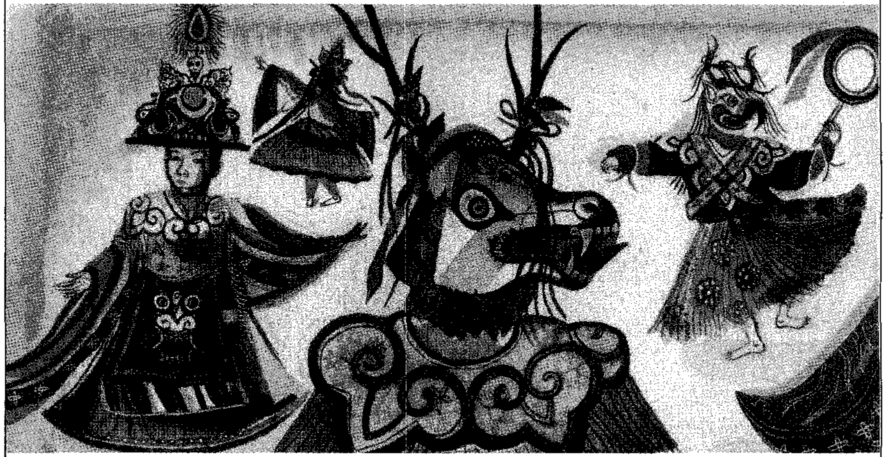
DANCE • FALL PREVIEW



ANNA BHUSHAN

HIMALAYAN STEPS

It's not every day that a group of Tantric Buddhist monks appear in public spaces around the city to demonstrate demon-subjugation dances, known as *cham*, which are performed in elaborate, brightly colored costumes and masks. The Rubin Museum of Art brings this rare treat to town with "Cham! Ritual Dances of Bhutan" (Sept. 13-21).

VARIETY SHOW

The annual extravaganza "Fall for Dance," which offers dance fans a chance to see a diverse group of acclaimed international companies for ten bucks, returns to City Center (Sept. 17-27). The roster includes established companies such as American Ballet Theatre, the Suzanne Farrell Ballet, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza, along with up-and-comers such as Larry Keigwin and Kate Weare.

ON YOUR TOES

The always exciting American Ballet Theatre season at City Center (Oct. 21-Nov. 2) commemorates the British-born choreographer Antony Tudor with performances of several of his ballets, including the Pas de Deux from his one-act "Romeo and Juliet" (1943). Also on the program are the Czech choreographer Jiří Kylián's "Overgrown Path," a world première by Lauri Stallings, and a Paul Taylor favorite, "Company B." ♦ Christopher Wheeldon's promising new ensemble, Morphoses/The Wheeldon Company, returns to City Center for its second season (Oct. 1-5) with a new octet by Wheeldon, two works by Sir Frederick Ashton, a clever duet by Lightfoot León, set to a Gertrude Stein poem, and a new piece by the former William Forsythe dancer Emily Molnar. ♦ The venerable San Francisco Ballet, which turns seventy-five this year, comes to City Center (Nov. 10-18) with seven New York premières, including works by Mark Morris and Jorma Elo.

DANCE AROUND THE WORLD

On Oct. 4, at Symphony Space, as part of the New York Tango Festival, the inventive Mariela Franganillo offers "Tango Noir," a revue featuring the jokey and virtuosic Hermanos Macanas. Afterward, a *milonga*, or tango party, keeps the dancing going, Argentinean style—from eleven to dawn. ♦ Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's engagement with Steve Reich's music has been long-standing and fruitful. At BAM Oct. 22-25, she offers two new pieces, set to Reich's "Four Organs" and "Eight Lines," along with her celebrated treatments of "Piano Phase" and "Drumming." ♦ The fierce ladies of Urban Bush Women join the men of Senegal's Compagnie Jant-Bi for a cross-cultural encounter with their collective past, in "Les Écailles de la Mémoire" (at BAM Nov. 19 and Nov. 21-22). ♦ Pina Bausch Tanztheater Wuppertal brings "Bamboo Blues" to BAM (Dec. 11-20). In the work, Bausch riffs on the Indian subcontinent, a theme that should produce a lush and playful collection of sketches and skits.

twenties photogram of glinting, levitating forms. Through Sept. 1. ♦ **"Jeff Koons on the Roof."** Through Oct. 26. ♦ **"Early Buddhist Manuscript Painting: The Palm-Leaf Tradition."** Through March 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

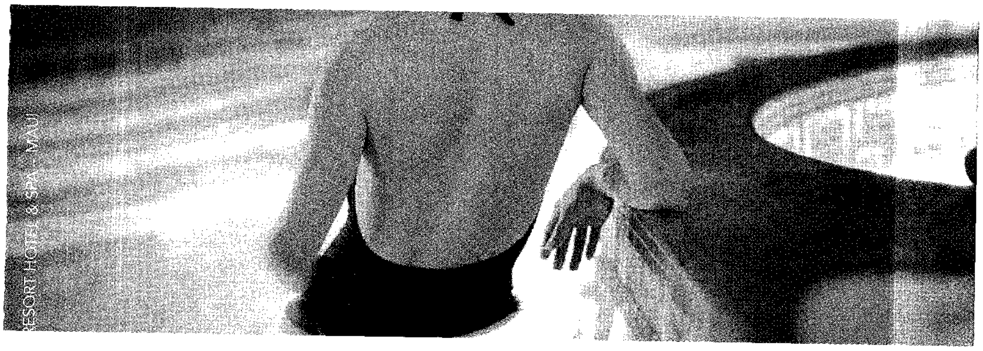
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dalí: Painting and Film."** Through Sept. 15. ♦ **"Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling."** Through Oct. 20. ♦ **"Pipe, Glass, Bottle of Rum: The Art of Appropriation."** Through Nov. 10. ♦ **"Kirchner and the Berlin Street."** Through Nov. 10. ♦ **"Looking at Music."** Through Dec. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—A tremendous steel spider opens **"Louise Bourgeois,"** a tour through six decades of sculpture, painting, drawing, installation, and filmed performance by the French-born, New York-based artist. Paintings from the forties presage the stacked totemic assemblages of the fifties, which segue to phallic carved marbles, tuberous bronzes, enclosed "Cells," and stitched-fabric objects. Bourgeois's approach has become more precise over the years, as raw anger has ceded ground to fierce intellect. Her depictions of the muscle and blood beneath the skin of domestic life, her idiosyncratic lexicon, and her ability to elicit a visceral reaction sharpen as one ascends the chronologically arranged spiral. Bourgeois's work is feminine, tough, and confrontational (if it were an actress, it would be Barbara Stanwyck or Bette Davis). Power and honesty trump sentiment at every turn, often to skin-crawling effect. Through Sept. 28. ♦ **"Imageless: The Scientific Study and Experimental Treatment of an Ad Reinhardt Black Painting."** Through Sept. 14. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe."** At the age of thirty-two, after a string of devastating personal and professional crises, Buckminster Fuller decided to devote himself to improving the lot of humankind, via design, architecture, invention, and philosophy. He described himself as a "comprehensive anticipatory design scientist," a catchall phrase that still doesn't convey the breadth of the project that the utopian polymath set for himself during the next five decades. This show documents his fantastically eclectic career, in plans for floating cities, models of geodesic domes, and photographs of him performing in a play at Black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Mountain College in the forties. The only surviving prototype of his Dymaxion car may be of particular interest these days: the submarine-shaped vehicle, which carried eleven passengers, could go a hundred and twenty miles per hour and got up to thirty miles per gallon. Looking at all this, one is amazed that Fuller could limit a 1975 lecture series titled "Everything I Know" to just forty-two hours. Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Paul McCarthy: Central Symmetrical Rotation Movement—Three Installations, Two Films."** Through Oct. 12. ♦ **"Polaroids: Mapplethorpe."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Ghada Amer: Love Has No End."** Through Oct. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"The Horse."** Through Jan. 4. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BARD GRADUATE CENTER
18 W. 86th St. (212-501-3000)—**"Thomas Hope: Regency Designer."** Necessity may have been the mother of invention for Hope (1769-1831), the scion of a wealthy banking family, who had a cavernous house in London and an estate in Surrey to fill. Hope's designs, which were published in his popular book "Household Furniture and Interior Decoration," published in 1807, borrowed heavily from ancient Greece and Rome. His tables have caryatid legs and bases influenced by Roman altars and candelabras; wall lights are shaped like griffins. But Hope's approach also resulted in startlingly modern-looking objects: a chair based on the ancient Greek klismos would look right at home in Art Deco digs. Through Nov. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"House Proud: Nineteenth-Century Watercolor Interiors from the Thaw Collection."** Through Jan. 25. (Open Mondays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Frick's Vermeers Reunited."** Through Nov. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Heavy Light: Recent Photography and Video from Japan."** Through Sept. 7. ♦ **"Bill Wood's Business."** Through Sept. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976."** Through Sept. 21. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Philip Guston: Works on Paper."** Through Aug. 31. ♦ **"Liszt in Paris: Enduring Encounters."** Opens Aug. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART
Broadway at 61st St. (212-408-1500)—The great German artist Albrecht Dürer travelled to Italy in 1494 and returned a year later to Nürnberg inspired by the works of his southern contemporaries and the ancient sculptures he saw there. (A second yearlong visit, in 1505, was just as fruitful.) **"Art in Transition"** tracks Dürer's post-Italy development in prints, his strongest medium. In addition to the predictable greatest hits—the engravings "Adam and Eve," "Melancholia," and "The Knight, Death, and the Devil," as well as the woodcuts "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" and "The Rhinoceros"—there are oddball devotional works and an extraordinary, multi-panel woodcut portraying Emperor Maximilian I riding in a triumphal chariot. Like the Met's 2003 show of Leonardo da Vinci drawings, this is mandatory viewing for lovers of master printing and draftsmanship. Through Sept. 21. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

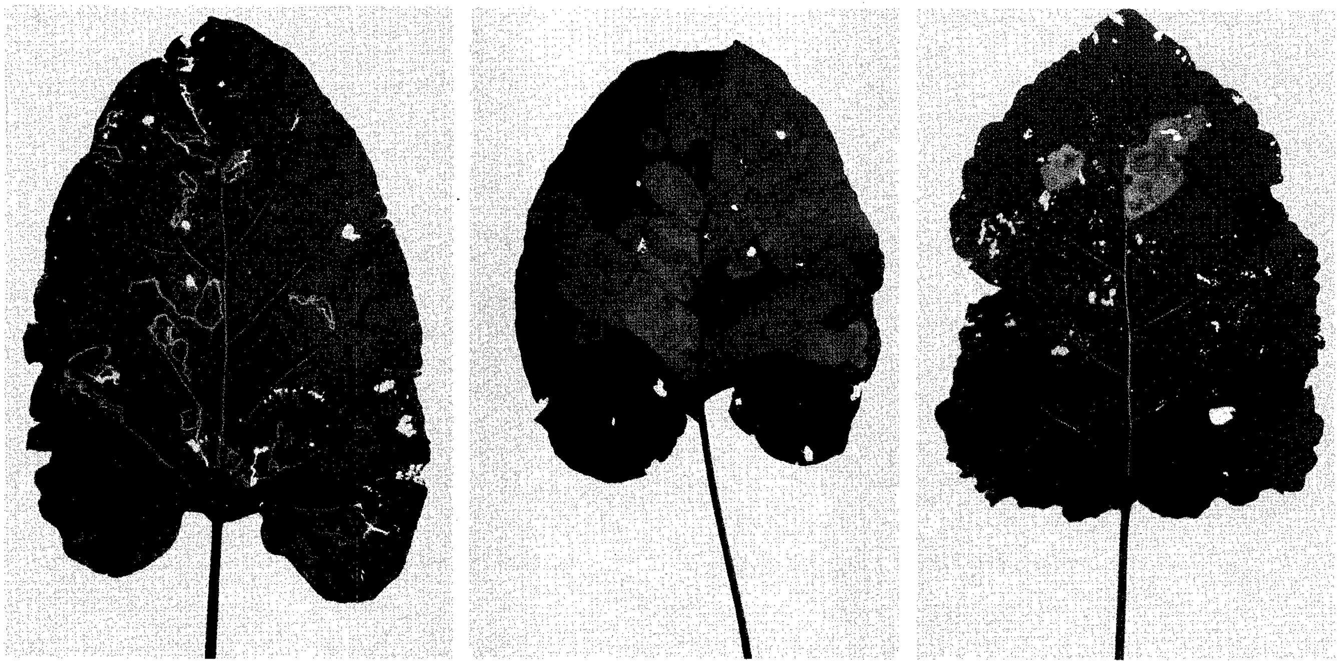
NEW MUSEUM
235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—**"After Nature."** Through Sept. 21. ♦ **"Altoids Award: Ei Arakawa, Lauren Kelley, Michael Patterson-Carver, and Michael Stickrod."** Through Oct. 12. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—Well before there were bumper stickers, Presidential candidates were merchandising their campaigns. In the diverting exhibition **"If Elected: The Game of American Politics,"** a sewing box endorses John Quincy Adams, fabric is printed with Andrew Jackson's face, and lanterns promote Abe Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. There are thimbles manufactured for Hoover, Coolidge, and Nixon; bandannas designed for Cleveland and George W. Bush; cigars hawking Wendell Willkie and F.D.R. There's also an "Ike" dress worn by an Eisenhower supporter and a mini-history of the lapel button, emblem of mass-market political promotion. The production of political pins—more than a century's worth are on view here—began in the eighteen-sixties, with the advent of tintype, and exploded in the 1896 Presidential race, after the invention of plastic. Through Jan. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
40 Lincoln Center Plaza (212-592-7730)—Kenn Duncan (1928-86), whose photographs appeared regularly in *After Dark* and *Dance Magazine*, made portraits that are hard to distinguish from head shots: glossy, flattering, upbeat, theatrical, and utterly unnatural. As this overwhelmingly generous selection of works from the seventies makes clear, Duncan's style was flamboyantly swish at a time when many of his subjects were still in the closet. He got straight stars to take their shirts off and divas to unbutton their blouses. Perhaps because of the many instances of full frontal nudity, a notice at the entrance advises "viewer discretion"; Duncan's shots of Sylvia Miles and Blossom Dearie topless, however, deserve warning signs of their own. Through Oct. 25. (Open Mondays and Thursdays, noon to 8, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 11 to 6, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5:45.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Olafur Eliasson."** Through Aug. 31. ♦ **"Arctic Hysteria: New Art from Finland."** Through Sept. 15. ♦ **"James Turrell's Meeting."** The artist's "skyspace" installation will be open at sunset on Saturdays. Through Sept. 6. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Kehinde Wiley—The World Stage: Africa, Lagos ~ Dakar."** Through Oct. 26. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)



"Burdock," an exhibition of photographs by the writer Janet Malcolm, opens at Bookstein on Sept. 9.

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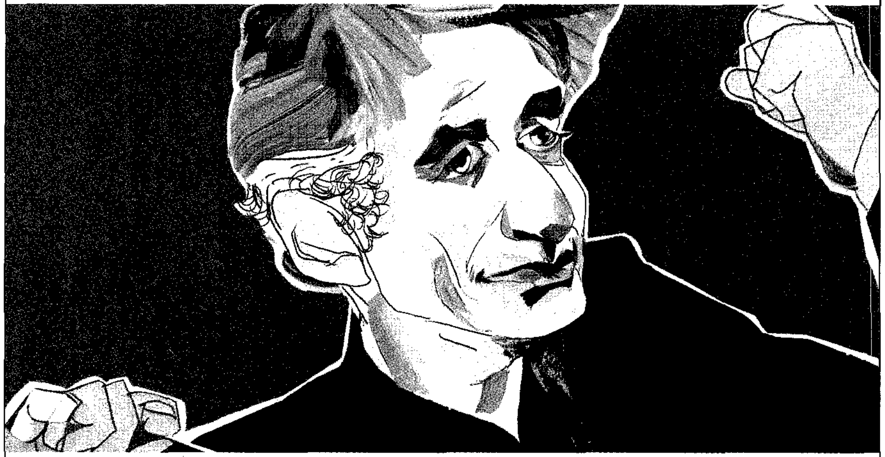


RICCARDO VECCHIO

LIKE FAMILY
Is Leonard Bernstein really gone? No other musician left his artistic and personal imprint on America the way Lenny did, but he belongs to New York first and foremost. He would have been ninety this year, and Carnegie Hall is celebrating, big time. The festivities kick off with an opening-night gala concert given by Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony (Sept. 24), a lavish spread of excerpts from Bernstein's stage works (including "West Side Story," "On the Town, "Trouble in Tahiti," and "A Quiet Place") that features performances by Dawn Upshaw, Thomas Hampson, Christine Ebersole, and Yo-Yo Ma. Other Stern Auditorium events include an all-Bernstein concert by the New York Philharmonic and its incoming music director, Alan Gilbert, on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Maestro's seismic Carnegie Hall début (Nov. 14), and a rare performance of the still controversial "Mass" by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Morgan State University Choir, and the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, all led by Marin Alsop (Oct. 24.) An Oct. 25 performance of "Mass" at the United Palace Theatre, in Washington Heights, will feature five hundred singers from New York City schools.

STAR QUALITY
Peter Gelb, the avatar of the populist new Met, will take a page from Joseph Volpe's playbook by opening the season not with a daring new production but with an old-time glamourfest—a Renée Fleming gala (Sept. 22), in which the soprano sings in Act II of "La Traviata" and Act III of "Manon," as well as in the final scene from "Capriccio." James Levine, Marco Armiliato, and Patrick Summers conduct.

THE OTHER GUY
Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Prokofiev, once ranked equally with Shostakovich, has fallen behind his junior colleague in both popular and critical acclaim. Lincoln Center will make amends this season with a burst of concerts by the Kirov Orchestra, under the direction of Valery Gergiev (Nov. 9-10 and Nov. 16-17). The fall programs (the series continues in March) include complete concert performances of the ballet "Romeo and Juliet" and the opera "The Love for Three Oranges," as well as a program featuring music from the films "Ivan the Terrible" and "Alexander Nevsky."

TAKING THE WATERS
For more than three decades, the German spa town of Badenweiler was the scene of the Römerbad Musiktage, one of Europe's major new-music festivals. In four "Night Fantasies" concerts (Nov. 20-23), the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (at the New York Society for Ethical Culture) conjures up the spirit of this enterprise with programs that feature music by Carter, Crumb, and Ligeti, along with such classics as Berg's "Seven Early Songs," Bartók's "Out of Doors" Suite, and Chausson's "Chanson Perpétuelle"; members of the audience, in true Römerbad style, can enjoy a glass of wine during intermissions.

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

"QUIET POLITICS"
For a recent show at Zwirner, in Chelsea, Francis Alÿs filmed himself carrying a leaky can of paint along a disputed border in Israel. The artists here follow suit, taking a poetic approach to political subjects. David Hammons makes over an American flag in red, black, and green (the colors of the Black Power movement). Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla's adjacent containers of motor oil and water convey, with an economy of means, the source of some of the world's greatest conflicts. Other works, notably those by Christopher Williams, Lisa Oppenheim, and Adel Abdessemed, comment on subjects like racism and war with formal grace. Through Aug. 29. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

Short List

FRANK GOHLKE: Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Aug. 29. **"FRIDA KAHLO AND THE MEXICAN RENAISSANCE":** Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059. Through Sept. 14. **"IMPLANT":** UBS Art Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 212-713-2885. Through Oct. 31.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

"ARTIST AS PUBLISHER"
Three cramped "reading rooms" are about as well suited to browsing as a bus shelter. But among the dozens of indie publications on display are some great titles—"I Heart Darkness," by Natascha Sofia Snellman, and "Good Morning, Evil Genius," by Meg Cranston—and beautiful concepts, like Brian Kennon's "Black and White Reproductions of the Abstract Expressionists," in which the colors in famous paintings are indicated by squares printed in the margins. Other books challenge the very idea of bookness, like J. Patrick Walsh III's stapled, photocopied "Spotlight Murders" or Scott Hug (publisher of the cult zine *K48*) and Billy Miller's party-in-a-vitrine, complete with videos, homoerotic photographs, and ephemera. Through Sept. 13. (Center for Book Arts, 28 W. 27th St. 212-481-0295.)

"I WON'T GROW UP"
Childhood can be traumatic. Also, kids have too many toys. The first of these truisms furnishes the thesis for "I Won't Grow Up," but the latter could be the show's underlying principle. Like Park Avenue playrooms, the gallery is overstuffed with child-themed works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, the Chapman Brothers, Jeff Koons, Takashi Murakami, Andy Warhol, and others. It's a fun show, but one can imagine a more wistful version extracted from the jamboree—one that would feature Brian Belott's Merzbild board books, E. V. Day's mummified Barbie dolls, Angela Strassheim's photographic homage to little girls and horses, and Louise Bourgeois's ingenue runaway, painted in 1938. Through Aug. 29. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

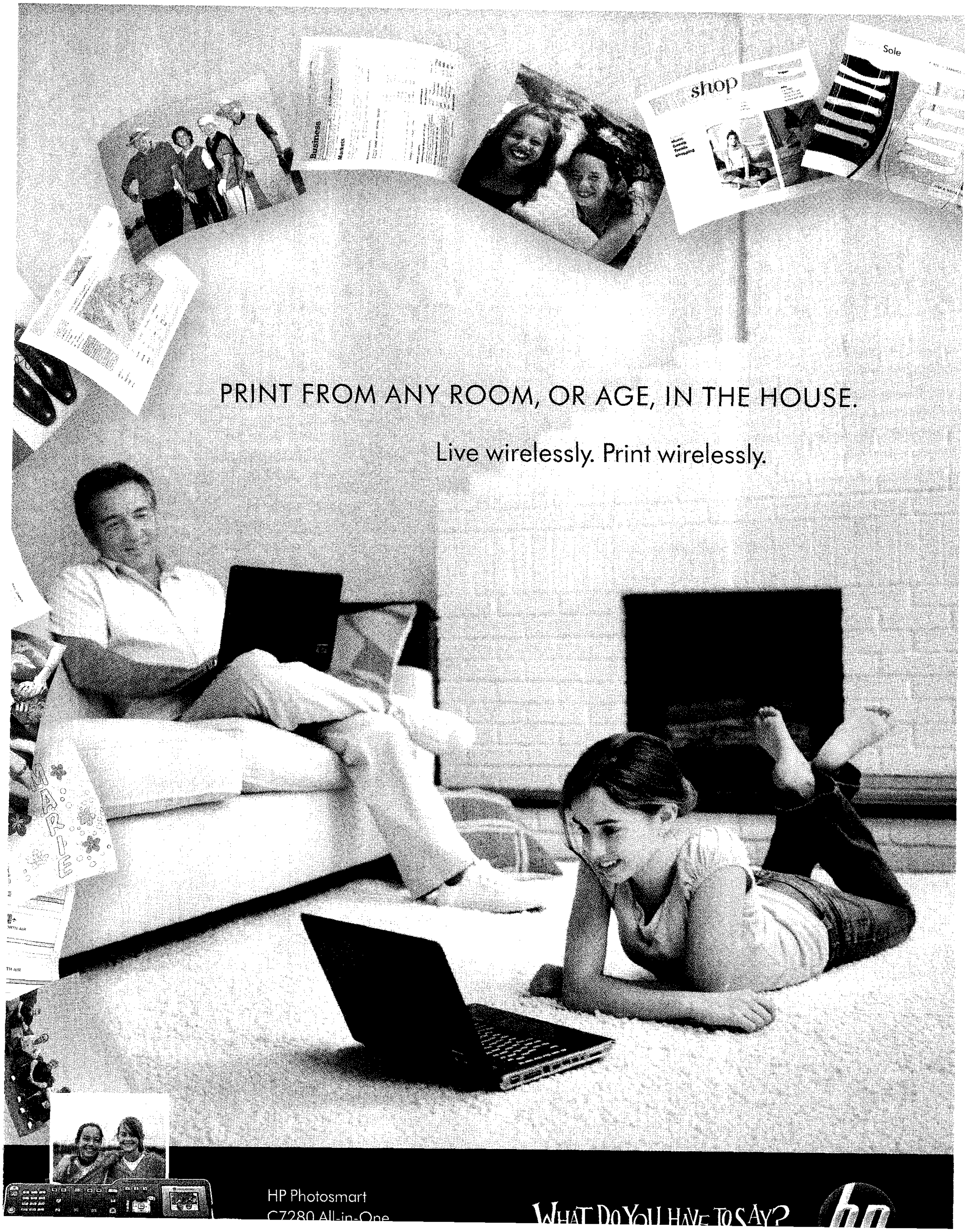
"A MEMBER OF THE WEDDING"
The jargon-laden text that accompanies this visually intriguing show casts artists as outsiders (if, in fact, that's what "spectators to the basic sacrosanct procreative ritual of the bourgeois wedding" means). Among the renegades are the punk rockers portrayed in Endre Aalrust's photographs; the spectral heroine of Paulette Phillips's black-and-white film loop; the young man practicing the piano in Dag Nordbrenden's winning photograph, shot in a living room jammed with Annie Lennox memorabilia; and a nonconformist Austro-Hungarian royal named Sissi—who was assassinated in 1898 by an anarchist wielding a nail file—the subject of T. J. Wilcox's backstory-heavy ink-jet print. Curated by the Berlin-based artist Susanne M. Winterling. Through Aug. 29. (Reich, 537a W. 23rd St. 212-924-4949.)

"A RICTUS GRIN"
Expressions devoid of emotional content—like the eerie fixed grin on a corpse or the insincere smile of a glib politician—inspired this intriguing sleeper of a show, curated by Christopher Eamon and Anke Kempkes. A cynical world view predominates, as seen in Öyvind Fahlström's delightfully unsettling 1966 film, in which bystanders watch fake demonstrators parading by with posters of Bob Hope and Chairman Mao. But some works break ranks. Duncan Campbell's Godardesque video portrait of the feisty, cigarette-wielding Irish activist Bernadette Devlin, who was elected to parliament in 1970, at the tender age of twenty-one, is surprisingly poignant. Through Sept. 6. (Broadway 1602 Gallery, 1182 Broadway, at 28th St. 212-481-0362.)

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

LIA HALLORAN
Setting her camera up for an extended exposure, Halloran photographs herself skateboarding at night in Los Angeles, but she records only the trajectory of a light strapped to her wrist. Her body disappears, its movement registering as a tangle of bold white lines that swoop and skitter across the landscapes of skate parks, underpasses, pedestrian bridges, and alleyways. The results resemble the painter Elliott Puckette's incised calligraphic abstractions superimposed on the vaguely ominous setting of a noir film. Streaming across these burnished, day-for-night images, Halloran's fugitive signs of life are as exhilarating as a skater's streak off a railing. Through Sept. 13. (DCKT, 195 Bowery, at Spring St. 212-741-9955.)

"PRETTY UGLY"
Sprawling, confusing, grotesque, and impressive, this two-gallery show was organized by Alison Gingeras. One wall boasts flower paintings by the unlikely triumvirate of Murakami, Warhol, and Marsden Hartley. Jörg Immendorff's green-themed canvas is paired with Edward Middleton Manigault's Cézannesque canvas "Tree Rhythms," from 1918. A salacious John Currin painting hovers above a Haim Steinbach shelf; a Hans Bellmer photograph is forced into conversation with Guy Bourdin's avant fashion photographs and an early Eva Hesse painting. There are rooms devoted to various themes—"Fluids," "Ladies," "Heads," "Pink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and/or Gold." The whole thing is exhilaratingly heterodox, but it risks becoming an exercise in which the curator trumps the art. Through Aug. 29. (Brown, 620 Greenwich St. 212-627-5258; Maccarone, 630 Greenwich St. 212-431-4977.)

GALLERIES—THE BRONX

"IN RESPONSE: SUMMER PROJECTS"
For centuries, artists tried to emulate nature—consider Pliny's tale about birds trying to eat the grapes portrayed in a painting by Zeuxis. But contemporary artists tend to favor response over mimesis. Among the works here are Scherezade's "Green Wall" (the only piece installed outdoors), in which photographs mounted on a Plexiglas armature flutter in the breeze; Maria Martinez-Cañas's sepia-toned photographs of Pine Plains, New York, taken with a vintage camera and embellished with real willow branches; and Milton Rosa-Ortiz's glittery, floral-inspired installation made of beads. More Zeuxis-like are Christopher Russell's intricate ceramic sculptures, inspired, in part, by bee habitats, and Andrew Cooks's paintings on paper, which nod to Persian and French formal gardens. Through Sept. 1. (Wave Hill, W. 249th St. at Independence Ave. 718-549-3200.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

JUILLIARD ARTISTS IN CONCERT
Every week, the Lincoln Center conservatory sends some of its finest young musicians downtown to serenade lunchtime listeners, at no charge. The latest performance is by the harpist Michelle Gott and the flutist Nadia Kyne, who offer a brief concert of works by Ibert, Gluck ("Dance of the Blessed Spirits"), Molnar, and Astor Piazzolla (an arrangement of "Histoire du Tango"). (180 Maiden Lane. Aug. 26 at 12:30. No tickets required.)

OPERA OMNIA:
"THE CORONATION OF POPPEA"
A new Baroque-opera company takes the genre back to its intimate, Florentine beginnings by staging Monteverdi's immortal (and amoral) masterwork in modern dress at the new concert and club space (Le) Poisson Rouge (where a cash bar awaits your patronage). Avi Stein conducts an ensemble using period instruments; Hai-Ting Chinn, Cherry Duke, and the captivating Melissa Fogarty head the cast. (158 Bleecker St. 800-838-3006. Aug. 27 at 7:30. Doors open one hour before the performance.)

SIMONE DINNERSTEIN
The young American pianist, whose disk of Bach's Goldberg Variations was a best-seller last year, has a new album coming out—"The Berlin Concert," a recording of a recital she gave at the Philharmonie's Kammermusiksaal in November. She plays music from the disk's repertoire—including Bach's French Suite No. 5 in G Major and Philip Lasser's "Variations on a Bach Chorale"—in a celebratory concert at (Le) Poisson Rouge. Free beer (from the excellent upstate craftsmen of Brewery Ommegang) can be sampled along with the music. (158 Bleecker St. 800-838-3006. Aug. 28 at 7:30.)

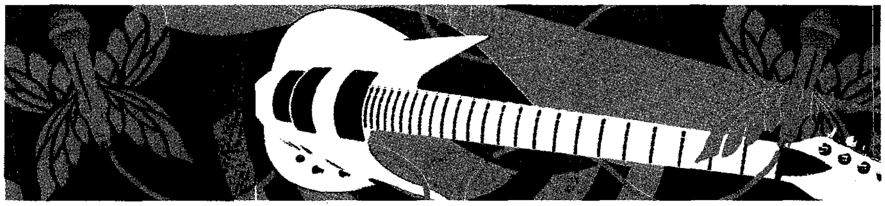
BARGEMUSIC
The floating chamber-music series, which has followed an adventurous path during the violinist Mark Peskanov's term at the helm, will spend the holiday weekend celebrating its year of commissions, which were supported by the New York State Music Fund. A cadre of musicians that includes Peskanov, the cellist Felix Fan, and the Voxare Quartet performs new works by Dick Hyman (the Piano Trio, with the composer at the keyboard), Behzad Ranjbaran, and Daniel Ott ("Blue Water," for violin, piano, and string quartet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Aug. 29-30 at 8 and Aug. 31 at 4.)

OUT OF TOWN

SKANEATELES FESTIVAL
Twenty-eight years ago, David and Louise Robinson decided that the Finger Lakes area needed some first-class chamber music. Their festival, named for the lake on which their house, Brook Farm, sits (concerts are sometimes given on the expansive front porch and lawn), has maintained a small-town feel; David Ying, the cellist of the acclaimed Ying Quartet, and his wife, the pianist Elinor Freer, anchor a superb roster of young talent which also includes the pianist Adam Neiman and the cellist Julie Albers. Aug. 28 at 8: Chamber works by Mozart, Arensky (the plaintive Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor), and Schubert (the String Quintet). (First Presbyterian Church.) ♦ Aug. 29 at 8: The flutist Joanna Bassett joins the group for a program featuring Rachmaninoff's Sonata for Cello and Piano, Beethoven's Piano Trio in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2, and Joan Tower's "Petroushskates." (First Presbyterian Church.) ♦ Aug. 30 at 7:30: The schedule concludes with a concert at Brook Farm by the Festival Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Peter Bay; music by Stravinsky (the "Dumbarton Oaks" Concerto), Bach (the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major), and Mozart (the Sinfonia Concertante in E-Flat Major) is on the program. (Skaneateles, N.Y. 315-685-7418.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The conductor and impresario Alexander Platt brings his summer festival to a close with three concerts saluting Schubert and Mahler. Aug. 29 at 8: In what might be called an alternative Schubertiade, the pianist Marc Peloquin offers two masterpieces by the Viennese titan (the "Moments Musicaux" and Liszt's arrangement of the lied "Gretchen am Spinnrade") alongside two works by the flamboyantly brilliant downtown neo-Romantic David Del Tredici ("Ballade in Lavender" and "S/M Ballade"). ♦ Aug. 30 at 6: In "The Heavenly Life," Platt conducts the Maverick Chamber Players in the chamber version of Mahler's Symphony No. 4 (which Platt reconstructed from the sketches of the Mahler disciple Erwin Stein), along with works by Mozart and Aaron Jay Kernis (the affecting song cycle "Simple Songs"); the soprano Maria Jette and the pianist Stephen Hargreaves (performing Kernis's "Lullaby") are his guests. ♦ Aug. 31 at 4: The venerable American String Quartet closes the season with three classics: Haydn's Quartet in D Minor ("Quinten"), Op. 76, No. 2; Berg's Quartet, Op. 3; and Schubert's grand, final quartet, No. 15 in G Major. (Woodstock, N.Y. For information about tickets, call 845-679-8217.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The Shanghai String Quartet, a fiery and superbly disciplined young ensemble, is in residence for the weekend at northern Connecticut's string-quartet



JOHN RITTER

POP NOTES
AUTUMN SOUNDS

Tricky, "Knowle West Boy" (Domino): The king of moody British trip-hop returns with an album that veers between woozy autobiography and dark, stabbing rock (Sept. 9).

George Clinton and the Gangstas of Love, "Radio Friendly" (Shanachie): The funk godfather covers R. & B. standards with a large group of collaborators that includes Sly Stone and Carlos Santana (Sept. 16).

"Wreckless Eric & Amy Rigby" (Stiff): Two beloved cult figures parlay a personal partnership into a professional one (Sept. 16).

Jenny Lewis, "Acid Tongue" (Warner): The Rilo Kiley front woman releases her second solo album, with help from Elvis Costello, Zooey Deschanel, Chris Robinson, and others (Sept. 23).

The Pretenders, "Break Up the Concrete" (Artist First): Chrissie Hynde puts together yet another bunch of musicians to play yet another bunch of tough, smart songs, some of which have a country feel (Sept. 23).

Tom Morello: The Nightwatchman, "The Fabled City" (Epic): The legendary rock guitarist (Rage Against the Machine, Audioslave) releases a second disk as his folk-for-the-common-man alter ego (Sept. 30).

Todd Rundgren, "Arena" (HiFi): Nearly every Rundgren album has a concept; this one is a return to the pump-your-fist rock of the late seventies and early eighties (Sept. 30).

Bob Dylan, "Tell-Tale Signs" (Columbia): The Bootleg Series continues with a multi-disk set of rarities from the most recent phase of Dylan's career, which means mainly soundtrack work and outtakes and alternate versions from "Out of Mercy" and "Time Out of Mind" (Oct. 7).

Lambchop, "Ohio (OH)" (Merge): More soulful country-folk from Kurt Wagner and his sprawling ensemble; the lead single is the beautifully abstract "Slipped Dissolved and Loosed" (Oct. 7).

Todd Snider, "Peace Queer" (Aimless): Any Snider release is an event, and this EP is no exception. His brilliant brand of rambling, homespun comedy is in fine form on the title track, and there's also a moving cover of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Fortunate Son" (Oct. 14).

Lucinda Williams, "Little Honey" (Lost Highway): Williams's fans once had to wait years between albums; now they're nearly an annual occurrence. This one features a duet with Elvis Costello and, hand to God, a cover of AC/DC's "Long Way to the Top" (Oct. 14).

Hank III, "Damn Right, Rebel Proud" (Curb): Hank Williams III looks just like his famous grandfather and raises hell just like his famous father; this album follows his established formula by mixing twisted hardcore and straightforward country (Oct. 21).

Labelle, "Back to Now" (Verve): Everyone knows the R. & B. trio of Patti LaBelle, Nona Hendryx, and Sarah Dash, if only because of "Lady Marmalade"; they're reuniting for their first album in more than three decades, with production by Gamble and Huff and Lenny Kravitz (Oct. 21).

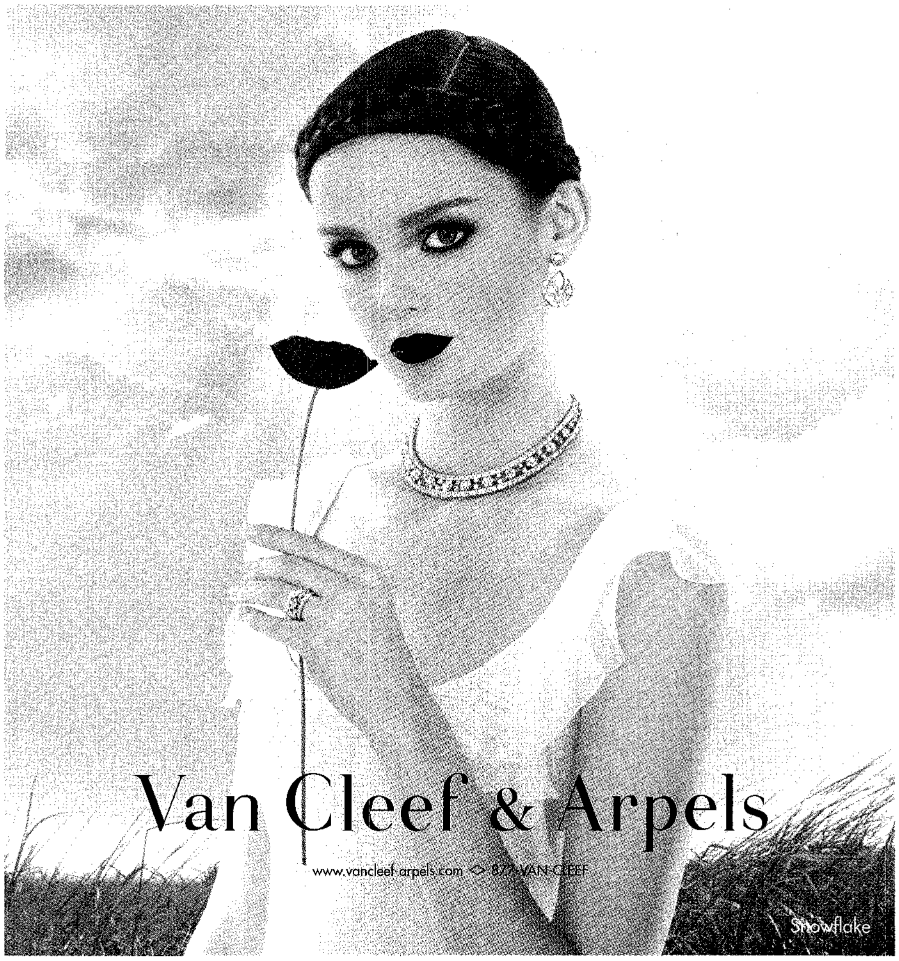
Grace Jones, "Hurricane" (Wall of Sound): The dance icon's first album in nearly two decades comes on the heels of a triumphant performance at the Meltdown Festival (Oct. 28).

Missy Elliott, "Block Party" (Atlantic): Elliott's new album has been leaking out in pieces this year, but it'll finally arrive in all its glory (Nov. 11).

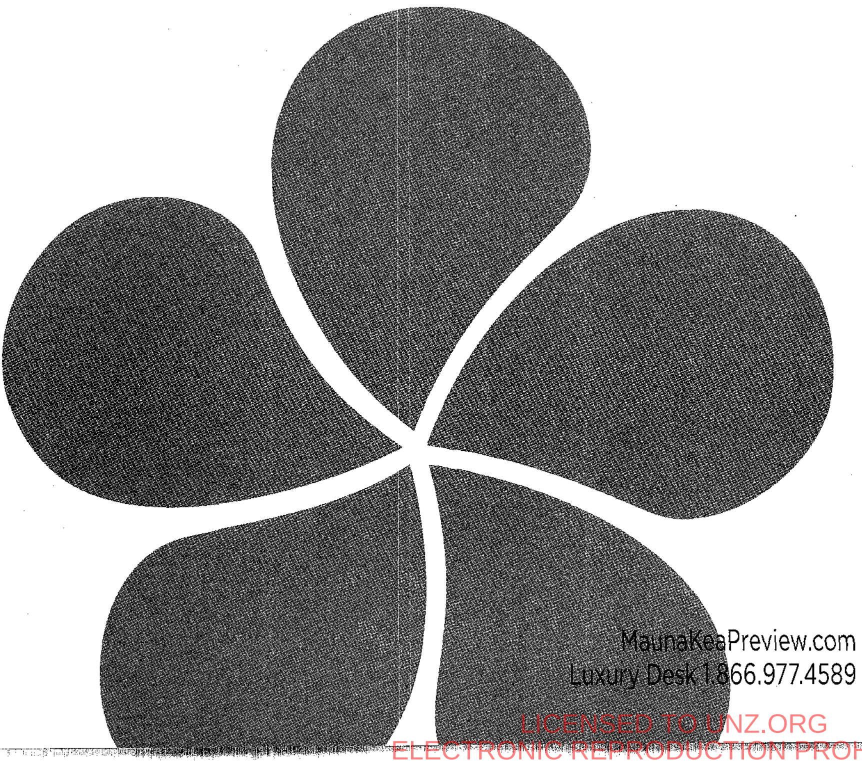
Taylor Swift, "Fearless" (Big Machine): "Change," a staple of the Olympics broadcasts, appears on the country star's sophomore album, along with a dozen other original compositions (Nov. 11).

Big Boi, "Sir Luscious Left Foot: The Son of Chico Dusty" (OutKast): The second solo album from the less eclectic but no less brilliant half of OutKast. Guests include Andre 3000, Raekwon, and Mary J. Blige (December).

—*Ben Greenman*



Plumeria will still grace the shore
where the sun ever sets deep gorgeous orange



shrine. Aug. 30 at 6:30: Two big chunks of standard repertory—the first of Beethoven's "Razumovsky" quartets (in F Major) and Schubert's String Quintet in C Major (with the cellist Sophie Shao). ♦ Aug. 31 at 3: In a benefit concert for the festival, the foursome teams up with the impassioned Amernet String Quartet for a concert that features music by Beethoven, Brahms (the String Quintet in G Major, Op. 111), and Mendelssohn (the Octet). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.)

TANNERY POND CONCERTS
Christian Steiner's distinctive festival, situated in an old Shaker village, has an almost private ambience. Two stars of the vocal world—the mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux and the pianist Craig Rutenberg—grace his next program, performing songs by Haydn and Carl Loewe ("Frauenliebe," his settings of the poems that Schumann used in "Frauenliebe und -leben") and Spanish-themed songs by Rossini and Manuel Garcia, among others. (New Lebanon, N.Y. 888-820-9441. Aug. 30 at 8.)

WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The festival, tucked away near the northern reaches of Catskill Park, closes its season with a duo concert by two formidable jazz pianists, Bill Charlap and his wife, Renee Rosnes. (Windham, N.Y. 518-263-5161. Aug. 30 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

BABYLON A.D.
Mathieu Kassovitz directed this futuristic thriller, starring Gérard Depardieu, Vin Diesel, and Charlotte Rampling, about a mercenary who transports a mysterious woman from Eastern Europe to New York. Opening Aug. 29. (In wide release.)

COLLEGE
A comedy, directed by Deb Hagan, about three prospective freshmen who visit a college campus. Starring Drake Bell, Kevin Covais, and Andrew Caldwell. Opening Aug. 29. (In wide release.)

DISASTER MOVIE
Jason Friedberg and Aaron Seltzer wrote and directed this comedy in the "Scary Movie" series. Starring Carmen Electra and Vanessa Minnillo. Opening Aug. 29. (In wide release.)

I SERVED THE KING OF ENGLAND
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 29. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

SUKIYAKI WESTERN DJANGO
In this mock Western, a lone gunman comes to the aid of a town caught in a gang war. Directed by Takashi Miike; starring Quentin Tarantino. Opening Aug. 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

TRAITOR
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 27. (In wide release.)

YEAR OF THE FISH
A contemporary Cinderella story, set in New York's Chinatown, featuring animation based on live-action images. Directed by David Kaplan. Opening Aug. 29. (Angelika Film Center.)

NOW PLAYING

AMERICAN MOVIE
Chris Smith's documentary, from 1999, about the three-year struggle of a young Wisconsin man (Mark Borchardt) and his drug-addled best friend (Mike Schank) to make a cheap horror movie, is a fascinating, disturbing character study. Borchardt is resourceful, if a little unhinged, and his fast-talking enthusiasm sweeps many of his friends and family members in pursuit of his dream. There are a lot of funny, sometimes uncomfortable glimpses of Borchardt's filmmaking (at one point, he pounds a friend's head, take after take, into a kitchen cabinet, until the cabinet breaks), but the documentary also deals with Borchardt's poor, uneducated background, the collection agencies that are after him, and the trouble he has supporting his three

kids. Smith sometimes ridicules his subject, but mostly he presents the story in a refreshingly heartfelt way. It is Borchardt's dream that keeps those around him alive and relatively sane.—*Bruce Diones* (MOMA; Aug. 29 and Aug. 31.)

BRIDESHEAD REVISITED

This episodic period drama, based on the 1945 novel by Evelyn Waugh, is centered on Charles Ryder (Mathew Goode), a soldier in the Second World War, as he looks back on his life. The story starts with him as a young artist at Oxford in the nineteen-twenties; there, he falls in love with the flamboyantly profligate life style of a pair of siblings, the aristocratic Sebastian (Ben Whishaw) and his beautiful sister Julia (Hayley Atwell). Charles spends some time at Brideshead, their spectacular estate, where their staunchly Catholic mother (Emma Thompson) marches around in dour frocks ordering everyone to chapel, and attempts to dissuade her beloved Sebastian from following his homosexual tendencies. The screenwriters, Andrew Davies and Jeremy Brock, took many liberties with the book, altering not only plot points but also the main thrust of Charles's spiritual journey: instead of turning from an agnostic into a Catholic, he starts out an atheist and, seemingly, remains one. This change lends nothing to the film, a torpid version of a classic that is ultimately and unjustly devoid of passion. Directed by Julian Jarrold.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

THE DARK KNIGHT

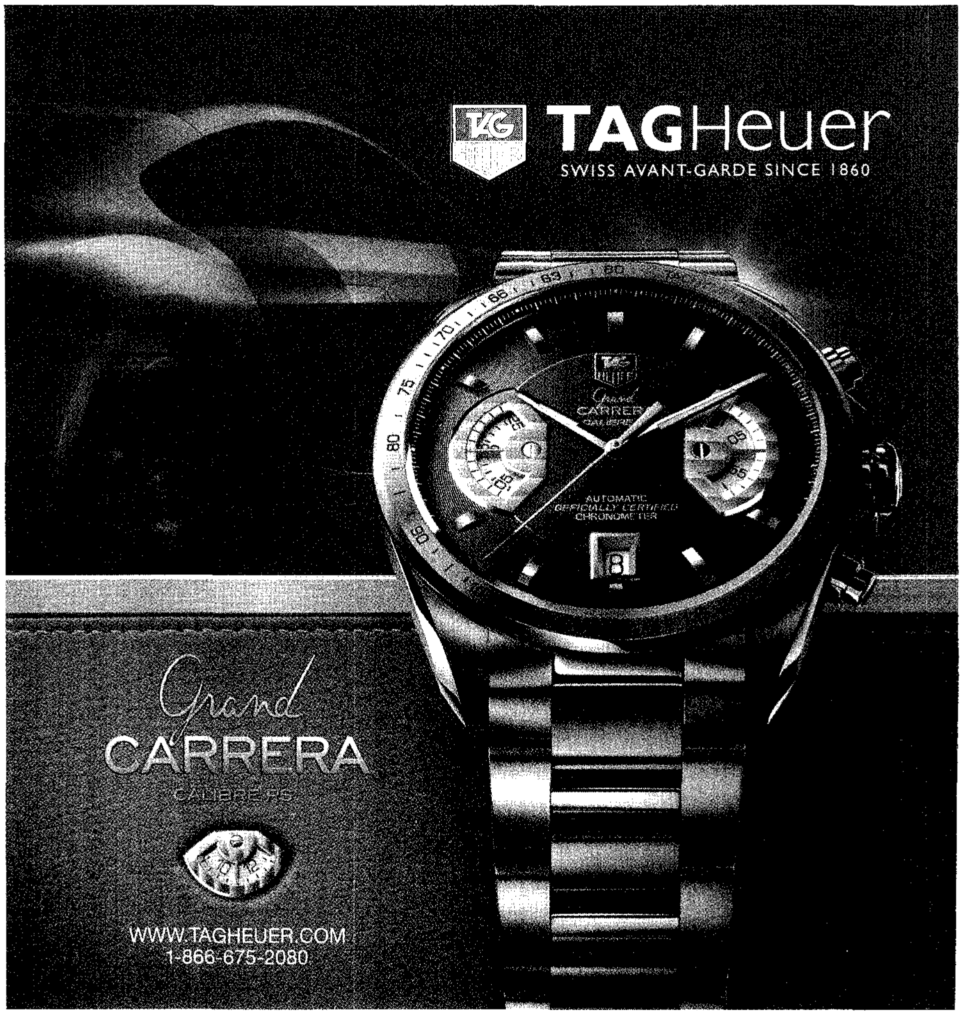
The last Batman movie was grim and methodical; this one, also directed by Christopher Nolan, is grim and incoherent, with a thudding soundtrack, fights shot from too close a distance to see anything, multiple events clanging together like discordant bells, and freaky sadism and menace. Christian Bale is the placid Bruce Wayne, a swank gent in Armani suits. As Batman, he has greater urgency, but he delivers his lines in a hoarse voice with an unvarying inflection. He's no match for the great Heath Ledger as his nemesis, the Joker. Ledger, in a fright wig and gobs of white makeup, shambles and slides into a room, bending his knees and twisting his neck and suddenly surging right into someone's face like a deep-sea creature coming up for air. He's thoroughly terrifying (do not, despite the PG-13 rating, bring little children), and, as you're watching him, you can't help wondering how badly he messed himself up in order to play the role this way. "The Dark Knight" has been made in a time of terror, but it's not fighting terror; it's embracing and unleashing it—while making sure, with proper calculation, to set up the next installment of the corporate franchise. With Gary Oldman, Aaron Eckhart, and Maggie Gyllenhaal.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/21/08.) (In wide release.)

EL CID

In this gorgeous 1961 spectacle, Charlton Heston persuasively embodies the medieval champion as if he were a liberal Kennedy-era Cold Warrior, defending his Spanish homeland against fanatic Moors while displaying his decency and open-mindedness by enlisting a friendly Moor as his ally. (Heston even strikes a monumental spark or two with his true love, played by Sophia Loren.) The director, Anthony Mann, and his peerless cinematographer, Robert Krasker, know how to use the wide screen to capture the span and tingle of court pageantry, jousting, and pitched warfare. Their scenes of single-warrior combat brought new levels of physical exertion and emotional realism to the cinematic depiction of broadsword swashbuckling. Much of the credit should go to the legendary second-unit director Yakima Canutt. The secret weapon of Mann's period epics, Canutt had a primal instinct for staging thrilling horse charges and bouts with lance and mace and positioning them for maximum Super Technirama 70 oomph.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade; Sept. 1.)

ELEGY

Of all the good actors who have adorned the cycle of middle-aged-professor films in the past decade, Ben Kingsley, in this adaptation of Philip Roth's 2001 novel, "The Dying Animal," is the most formidable and convincing. Kingsley's David Kepesh is a literature teacher at Columbia and a regular virtuoso performer on television and NPR. At sixty-four, Kingsley has the grizzled barrel chest of an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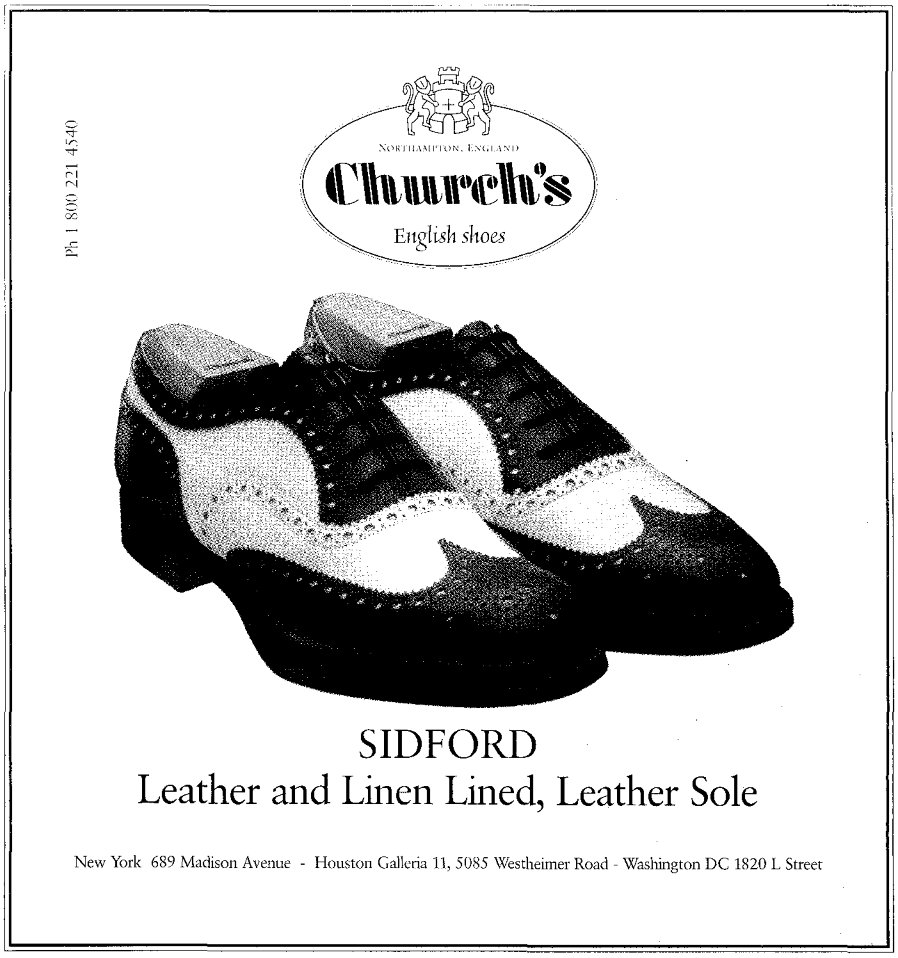
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aging sexual warrior, a strong nose, and a shaved head. He's shrewd enough to make David not a monster but a plausibly selfish man. Nicholas Meyer's script captures some of the Rothian tone—the impatience, the sharpness, the full-bore egotism that modulates into rueful self-recognition. At the end of the semester, the professor seduces a graduate student, Consuelo (Penélope Cruz), a woman of Cuban descent, slightly formal in her manner. She wants a connection to culture; David wants a final mad immersion in lust, which arrives, not to his surprise, with its attendant idiocies of jealousy and possessiveness. Mortality and misfortune abruptly enter his life as well. With Patricia Clarkson, Dennis Hopper, and Peter Sarsgaard. Directed by Isabel Coixet.—*D.D.* (8/11 & 18/08) (In wide release.)

EYES WITHOUT A FACE

Perhaps the most austerely elegant horror film ever made. The director, Georges Franju, called it "a poetic fantasy," and it's a symbolist attack on the ethics of scientists. Though in its way it's as simpleminded as the usual romantic young poet's denunciations of war or commerce, it has a vague, floating, lyric sense of dread which goes beyond the simpler effects of horror movies that don't make intellectual claims. Franju's approach is almost as purified and as mystic as Bresson's. The story is about a surgeon (Pierre Brasseur) who, in systematic experiments, removes the faces of beautiful young kidnapped women and tries to graft them onto the ruined head of his daughter (Edith Scob). He keeps failing, the girls are destroyed, yet he persists, in a terrible parody of the scientific method. In the end, the daughter—still only eyes without a face—liberates the baying hounds on which he has also been experimenting, and they tear off *his* head. The film is both bizarrely sophisticated (with Alida Valli as the mad surgeon's mistress, doing the kidnapping in a black leather coat) and ridiculously naïve (in its plot elements). Released in 1960. In French.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Aug. 27.)

A GIRL CUT IN TWO

The girl of the title of Claude Chabrol's impeccably calm and composed new movie is a TV weather presenter called Gabrielle Deneige (Ludivine Sagnier). Though not always as pure as her snowy name, she innocently drifts into the arms of two besmirching men: Charles Saint-Denis (François Berléand), a respected author decades her senior, and Paul Gaudens (Benoît Magimel), a chemicals-fortune heir who is an unsavory compound of dandy, cad, and wacko. Gabrielle is no fortune hunter, so what does she see in this pair? In a way, that is not Chabrol's business. The heart has its reasons, the reasons drive us mad, and his task is to forge a style from the result. His trademarks are all there: the quick, elliptical scenes, the unfussy fades to black, and the pulse of interest that can bring a camera hastening smoothly to inspect the characters, up close and personal, as their feelings ignite. Despite the seventy-eight-year-old director's Charles-like fondness for young flesh, the older people seem to attract him more; age has made them not wiser but more civilized and therefore, from his point of view, more corrupt. He remains as committed as ever to his twin duties of scourge and hedonist, yet one can't help wishing that he would, just once, cast off his own good narrative manners and arrange his passions into shameless, surreal anagrams of wit and lust.—*Anthony Lane* (8/25/08) (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

GOUPI MAINS ROUGES

Jacques Becker's second film, made in 1943, during the German occupation of France, suggests an air of corruption and menace beneath the folksy drama of a prodigal son returning from the city to his rustic home. The story concerns the Goupi clan, which runs just about everything in a farm village and is preparing to receive Eugène (Georges Rollin), a dandyish businessman called Monsieur, who has been summoned by his father (Arthur Devère), a tightwad innkeeper, on family business. The drama is set in motion by a practical joke—Monsieur's uncle (Fernand Ledoux), the Red Hands of the title, a mean-spirited and misanthropic poacher, waylays him en route from the train station and leaves him to his own devices in the countryside—which turns serious when the family's centenarian patriarch is found dead, a hidden bankroll vanishes, the domineering matriarch is murdered, and Monsieur finds himself accused. Becker's droll and meticulous observation of a wide range of characters—including Tonkin (Robert Le Vigan), an overbearing soldier returned from Indochina, and Mayflower (Blanchette Brunoy), the girl he loves, who is supposed to marry Monsieur—also reveals the country folk's deep-rooted venality, violence, and tribalism, together with a code of secrecy that conveys the desperate wartime mood. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; Sept. 2.)

HAMLET 2
Or, "Everybody Lives." This messy comedy, directed by Andrew Fleming, is about a Tucson drama teacher (Steve Coogan) who hopes to avoid the school-budget axe by developing a stage show for his students to perform in. His production reverses the ending of "Hamlet" and adds Jesus Christ and Hillary Clinton to the mix; it also alludes to his unhappy home life and his students' teen-age problems. The film veers so wildly between comedy (in which Coogan is often inspired) and kitchen-sink drama (everyone needs to learn to love themselves) that it fails to maintain a consistent tone. And an array of good supporting actors, including Catherine Keener, Elisabeth Shue, and Amy Poehler, are left standing in the wings with little to do. The material seems recycled from bits of "Happy, Texas," "Little Miss Sunshine," and a host of other Sundance favorites, and although that may sound gleefully anarchic, the result is mostly baffling.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

HANCOCK
Will Smith's lonely, alcoholic superhero—a nihilist slob who can't fly anywhere in Los Angeles without making a mess—is hated by everybody. The public curses him, and even the Dickensian TV lawyer Nancy Grace—of the curling lip and ferocious eye—gets on his case. A good-hearted P.R. man, Ray Embrey (Jason Bateman), tries to do something for Hancock's image. But then Ray introduces Hancock to his wife, Mary (Charlize Theron), and this inventive summer spectacle adds sexual tension and emotional power to its visual gags. For the first time in his life, Will Smith doesn't smile and tease and drawl; he stays in character as a self-hating lonely guy, and Theron, no longer covering her beauty, looks at him with an uncanny mixture of attraction and alarm. The movie takes surprising turns and is unexpectedly affecting. Written by Vy Vincent Ngo and Vince Gilligan and directed by Peter Berg.—*D.D.* (7/14/08) (In wide release.)

HELLBOY II: THE GOLDEN ARMY
The fabulist director Guillermo del Toro gets a hefty budget to continue his comic-book franchise with this action-packed fantasy about a heroic demon (Ron Perlman) and his fellow-beasties (Selma Blair and Doug Jones). This time, his team is joined by an ectoplasmic force (voiced by Seth MacFarlane, with a Colonel Klink-like accent) that can animate inanimate objects. It's that kind of movie. The plot is thin, involving some hooey about the denizens of a hidden underground world who are out to destroy humanity. And, while Hellboy and his friends set out to save the day, intriguing story lines are brought up and then dropped. (In all likelihood they will be picked up in a third installment.) This film is happy to coast on its good humor and brilliant action pieces. Fair enough, since del Toro has taken the poetry of some of his best work and butched it up, creating some of the most amazing-looking creatures and battles of his career. It's eye candy for the "Creature Features" set.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH
The work of Jules Verne continues to offer fertile ground for filmmakers. This latest adaptation of the 1864 novel is less fruitful than the 1959 attempt, in which the softly decisive voice of James Mason acted as a special effect in itself. Still, the new film, directed by Eric Brevig, at least has the courage of its own silliness; dispensing almost instantly with logic, it plunges its professor hero (Brendan Fraser) and his reluctant nephew (Josh Hutcherson) with Vernian briskness into their subterranean exploits, during which they encounter a lonely Icelandic maiden, a thundering dinosaur, and other fantastical creatures. Some theatres will be screening the

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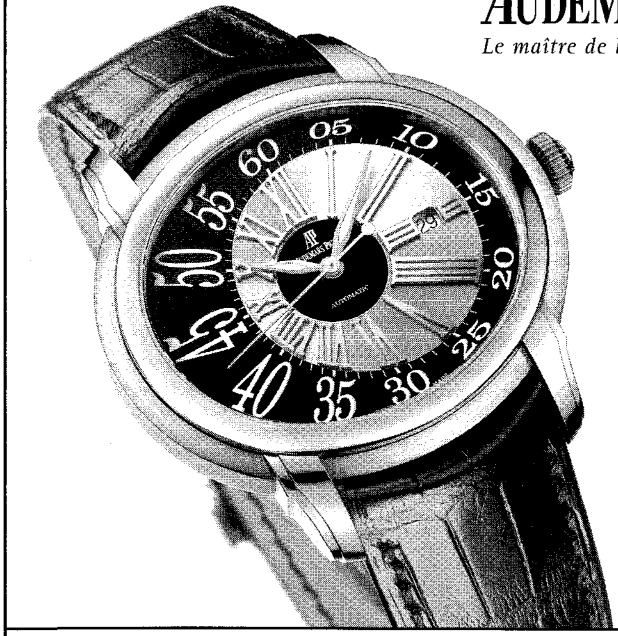

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movie in 3-D: worth catching, if you want the full headlong nonsense to loom out and smack you in the face.—*A.L.* (7/28/08) (In wide release.)

MAMMA MIA!

If viewed on a Saturday night with seven or eight friends, all drunk, this might seem a compelling dose of musical entertainment. Under any other conditions, it barely approaches the tolerable. Meryl Streep, having clearly given much thought to the art of letting one's hair down, plays Donna, who runs a hotel on a Greek island and pretends to forget her heady, promiscuous past; needless to say, it surfaces again when her daughter, Sophie (Amanda Seyfried), a bride-to-be, invites the three men who could conceivably be her father (Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, and Stellan Skarsgård) to attend the festivities. All of this is an excuse for the stars to perform, with varying degrees of skill, the greatest hits of Abba, some of which, regrettably, do not survive the disfigurement. Brosnan appears to be laboring under particular distress, and his expression, as he listens to Streep chanting her woes, is indistinguishable from that of James Bond being ranted at by a deluded villain. The script is by Catherine Johnson, who wrote the original stage play; the play's director, Phyllida Lloyd, is also along for the ride, and she seems so thrilled to have a camera at her command that she forces many of her actors to yelp and croon in closeup—never a good idea. The lighting would disgrace the interior of a bathroom. With Christine Baranski, who really can sing and dance, and Julie Walters, who can't.—*A.L.* (7/28/08) (In wide release.)

MAN ON WIRE

In 1974, Philippe Petit, the poet of the high wire, sneaked his merry men into one of the towers of the World Trade Center, strung a cable across to its sister building, and performed an above-the-clouds ballet that has never been equalled. This documentary, written and directed by James Marsh, takes the archival footage of that event and, along with new interviews from the participants as well as staged reconstructions, weaves an exciting tale that plays like a heist film. The story of how and why Petit accomplished this astonishing feat is thrilling, and the charismatic Frenchman was made for the camera. He's graceful, articulate, and endearing, much like the film itself.—*B.D.* (In limited release.)

MOMMA'S MAN

Azazel Jacobs directed this maudlin yet feel-nothing feature, which risks giving independent filmmaking a bad name. It tells, obliquely, the story of Mikey (Matt Boren), a thirtyish sad sack who has been visiting his parents (the director's real-life parents, the filmmaker Ken Jacobs and Flo Jacobs, whose Chambers Street loft is the movie's prime location) and refuses to return to his wife and daughter in Los Angeles, for no reason that he's prepared to give (and none that the viewer can detect, either). Instead, he reimmerses himself in the detritus of his childhood—video games, trading cards, long-lost friends, angry punk lyrics of his own devising, and an evening spent watching Charlie Chaplin's "Monsieur Verdoux" in bed alongside his parents—and lets no one in on his apparent pain. He suggests, in an aside, that his mother's recent illness has something to do with it, but even this could be one of his deceptions. If the setup seems curious enough, the director's handling of it is as sticky and soft as a soap opera; the fact that Jacobs made it for a pittance outside the studios—that he made it at all—is its principal virtue.—*R.B.* (Angelika Film Center.)

PINEAPPLE EXPRESS

It's a two-guys-on-the-run action comedy, based on an old idea by Judd Apatow, who also co-produced. Seth Rogen, a process server in a suit, witnesses a drug rubout; James Franco, Seth's pot dealer, knows the murderer, who goes in pursuit of the two of them with his pals. Both men are stoned all the time, and have to keep reminding themselves, in long, muzzy conversations that are an important part of the picture, that they are actually in serious trouble. The movie, directed by David Gordon Green, has an odd, interesting stop-and-go rhythm. The violence is perpetrated with the means at hand—bongs, lamps, coffeepots—and people often apologize for the damage they are doing. The big shoot-out and explosion at the end, however, are depressingly conventional. With Danny R. McBride as an exceptionally slippery drug distributor who takes a lot of punishment. Written by Rogen and Evan Goldberg.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT

Ingmar Bergman achieves one of the few classics of carnal comedy: a tragicomic chase and roundelay that raises boudoir farce to elegance and lyric poetry. This film is the culmination of Bergman's "rose" style; as writer and director, he ties up his persistent, early battle-of-the-sexes themes in an intricate plot structure. And in this fin-de-siècle house-party setting, with its soft light, its delicate, perfumed atmosphere, and its golden pavillion, the women are all beautiful and epigrams shine. The film becomes an elegy to transient love; a gust of wind, and the whole vision may drift away. As the hostess, the stage actress trying to win back the lawyer she loves, there is the great Eva Dahlbeck. Ulla Jacobsson is the lawyer's virgin wife; Harriet Andersson, a blonde here but as opulent and sensuous as in her earlier roles, is the impudent, love-loving maid; Margit Carlquist is the proud, unhappy countess. Gunnar Björnstrand is the lawyer, Björn Bjelvenstam is his son, Jarl Kulle is the strutting count, and Naima Wifstrand is the actress's aged mother, who is carried about for her game of croquet. Released in 1955. In Swedish.—*P.K.* (IFC Center; Aug. 29-Sept. 1.)

SWING VOTE

This Capra-esque satire of electoral politics, directed by Joshua Michael Stern, shamelessly milks a host of clichés, from the common man's innate moral compass to the wisdom of children, but it's redeemed by perfect comic pitch, able pacing, and sincere democratic warmth. Much of the credit goes to Kevin Costner for his hearty vigor as Bud Johnson, a ne'er-do-well blowhard living in a trailer in Texico, New Mexico, whose vote—through a series of surprisingly plausible coincidences—turns out to decide the state's tally, which, in turn, will decide the Presidential election. Bud, a poor single father whose sole claim on respectability is his daughter, Molly (the smart, relaxed Madeline Carroll), an ambitious and studious fifth grader, will cast that vote ten days after Election Day. When his identity is divulged, his life becomes a media circus, and, to his surprise and glee, he is assiduously courted by the superficial, slick, yet folksy Republican incumbent (Kelsey Grammer) and the tightly wound, wonky, and somewhat effete Democratic challenger (Dennis Hopper). The tone is apt, akin to that of a tall tale; the theme, dear to John Ford, of eliding fact into legend is given a striking new life; and a single brief scene of despair and deg-

The Chinese artist Chen Jiagang's show "The Great Third Front" opens at Houk on Sept. 11.

radation is more harrowing than those found in most hard-edged dramas.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

TELL NO ONE

The young director and actor Guillaume Canet, working with the screenwriter Philippe Lefebvre, has taken Harlan Coben's American mystery novel from 2001 and set it in the realistic social and working world of Paris and its environs, where good-looking, intelligent, and articulate people find one another interesting. François Cluzet dominates the movie as a pediatrician whose wife was murdered eight years previously. When messages show up on his computer suggesting that she may still be alive, he's amazed, and tries to reach her, only to run into the police and half the criminal underworld of Paris. Bounced back and forth among murderers and psychopaths, he has some remarkable adventures and learns about the past in tiny increments. We're meant to be a little lost, too—tantalized by hints and echoes. Underneath all the mysteries, however, there are some powerful forces at work, including the love of parents for children (one of whom is played by Canet himself). In French.—*D.D.* (7/14/08) (In wide release.)

TRANSSIBERIAN

Filmed in sickly greens and browns against a snowy white backdrop, this thriller starts promisingly, building up a good head of steam. The story concerns an American couple (Woody Harrelson and Emily Mortimer) who, while travelling on the Trans-Siberian Express, are targeted by drug runners and an insistent narcotics detective (Ben Kingsley). At first, the script, by Brad Anderson, who directed, and Will Conroy, tightly weaves characterization with dread in a nuanced, anxiety-producing way. But after a while Anderson dispenses with all the finesse and turns the film into a blur of double crosses, perpetually slamming train-car doors, and scene-chewing by Kingsley. The movie vanishes.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

TROPIC THUNDER

This comedy begins with a film-within-a-film, a Vietnam War movie that's being filmed on location, a savage spectacular with a bulging budget and a trio of major stars: depleted tough guy Tugg Speedman (Ben Stiller), five-time Academy Award winner Kirk Lazarus (Robert Downey, Jr.), and drug-hazed comic lardass Jeff Portnoy (Jack Black). When their hapless British director (Steve Coogan) is blown up by a land mine, the stars are left to fend for themselves in the jungle, whereupon they are beset by real enemies—a horde of drug dealers—and forced to fight back. Stiller not only stars in the film but also directed it and wrote the script, with Etan Cohen and Justin Theroux. These guys seem to be filing a stream of reports from the borders of taste; their deepest dread is to stay in the comfort zone. Their most controversial move is to have Downey perform entirely in blackface, but they carefully frame the insult in cooling ironies. As a jab at the movie business, "Tropic Thunder" is flailing and unfocussed, and the caterwauling of the characters and the nastiness (at once silly and bloody) of the special effects leaves you feeling more embattled than entertained. It's every man for himself, in every sequence, as though Stiller needed to prove that movie stars—these few, these unhappy few, this band of bastards—were the opposite of noble warriors.—*A.L.* (8/25/08) (In wide release.)

TROUBLE THE WATER

This depressingly conventional but ultimately fascinating documentary, directed by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal, views Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath from the perspective of one young New Orleans couple, Kimberly Rivers Roberts and Scott Roberts, who refused to evacuate their Ninth Ward home and videotaped the storm and the resulting flood. Following them through the stages of their ordeal, the filmmakers expose an appalling range of anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the federal government's feeble response to the crisis and its high-handed indifference toward the city's poorest residents. Yet, despite their legitimate outrage, the film also evokes unintended ironies. The Robertses, as seen in the film, are young people of extraordinary strength of character (Kimberly is an aspiring hip-hop artist, Scott a former drug dealer seeking to change his ways); they and their neighbor Larry Simms are seen rising to the challenge of danger with remarkable courage and generosity, and the film's ending suggests that they've managed to improve their lives after the catastrophe in ways that were not foreseeable beforehand. But the loss of lives, livelihoods, and community ties, as well as the yet unrelieved devastation, tempers their fortunes with grief and mourning.—*R.B.* (IFC Center and ImageNation at the Faison Firehouse Theatre.)

TABLES FOR TWO
SHALIZAR AND RAVAGH

1420 Third Ave., at 80th St. (212-288-0012); 11 E. 30th St. (212-696-0300)—Joining the Parthians (250 B.C.-226 A.D.), the Sassanians (224-651), and the Safavids (1501-1736) are two contemporary Persian dynasties: the Bayati (1990-present), which has built a mini-empire in 6-train territory, and the Tehrani (1999-present), whose fiefdom roughly follows the F line from midtown all the way to Long Island. Kaz Bayati—along with Parvez Eliaas, who is from Bangladesh and used to cook at Café Boulud—is the proprietor of the city's most venerable Iranian restaurant, Persepolis. Two months ago, he and Eliaas opened a second, spiffier place, Shalizar, which has forty more seats, fancy cocktails, and the same dry kebabs. Their chief competitor is Masoud Tehrani, whose family owns three other Iranian restaurants in the area: grubbier, more traditional, and all called Ravagh (including one in Nassau County).

The proof is in the *polo*. Shalizar's *albaloo*, the classic dish of saffron basmati rice and sweet and sour cherries, is a pleasant but indistinct mush. At Ravagh, meanwhile, the flavors of the fruit remain on the punchier side of stewed, bleeding into those of the rice only at the vivid edges—tie-dye you can eat. Shalizar sticks with standard china, but Ravagh plays to the eye with brightly colored crockery. The rice looks gorgeous on the platter, as if someone has sprinkled rose petals over a heap of marigolds. Ditto the grilled onion and tomato, traditional Persian accompaniments that are carefully chosen and attractively presented at Ravagh; at Shalizar, they're subprime specimens dulled by overcooking. Shalizar's *olivieh* (a potato salad with eggs, green peas, pickles, and chicken) is better balanced than Ravagh's, which has too much mayonnaise, but the latter place racks up the majority of the taste-test victories. *Mast musir* (yogurt with shallots): Ravagh. *Khoresh fesenjan* (a sweet stew of chicken, walnuts, and pomegranate paste): Ravagh. Most crucially, Ravagh's juicy, peppily seasoned *barg kebab*—as important a Persian contribution to society as an early postal system and carpets—relegates Shalizar's to a gray second place. But dinner at Ravagh, which begins bracingly, with the delivery of mint sprigs and radish slices, dwindles to an anticlimactic close. Shalizar's ends, with rose-extract ice cream, on a fragrant note. Long live them both. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Shalizar entrées $15-$29; Ravagh entrées $12-$23.)

—*Lauren Collins*

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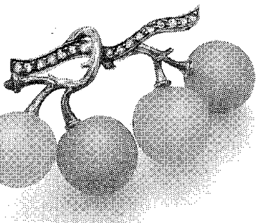

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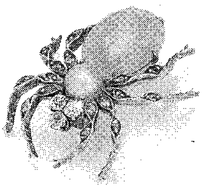

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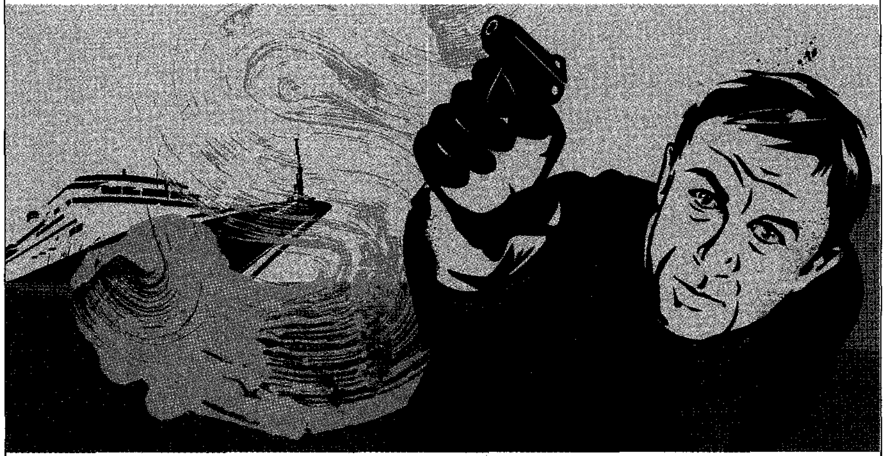
MOVIES • FALL PREVIEW



LICENSE TO KILL

The latest James Bond entry, "Quantum of Solace" (Nov. 7), again features Daniel Craig as 007. Marc Forster directs; the theme song is performed by Alicia Keys and Jack White. ♦ The fall's other major spy film, "Body of Lies" (Oct. 10), has a topflight director in Ridley Scott, big stars in Leonardo DiCaprio and Russell Crowe, and a story about a C.I.A. agent in pursuit of a terrorist in Jordan. ♦ John Hillcoat adapts Cormac McCarthy's novel "The Road" (Nov. 26), a postapocalyptic drama, with Viggo Mortensen, Charlize Theron, Robert Duvall, and Guy Pearce. ♦ If you like your spies a little less serious, try Joel and Ethan Coen's "Burn After Reading" (Sept. 12), a comic thriller about a C.I.A. official (John Malkovich) whose memoir is found by two personal trainers.

SHOOTING WAR

Spike Lee's eagerly anticipated "Miracle at St. Anna" (Sept. 26), based on a novel by James McBride, tells the story of four black American soldiers (Derek Luke, Michael Ealy, Laz Alonso, and Omar Benson) who get trapped behind enemy lines in Italy during the Second World War. ♦ Baz Luhrmann explores the Second World War, too, training his lens on his native land in "Australia" (Nov. 14), a drama about a ranch heiress (Nicole Kidman) and a cattleman (Hugh Jackman) who endure Japanese bombing raids. ♦ Clint Eastwood has also revisited the war recently, with his Iwo Jima diptych (which Spike Lee, incidentally, criticized for excluding black soldiers). Now Eastwood travels to nineteen-twenties Los Angeles for "Changeling" (Oct. 24), a drama, based on a true story, about a large-scale police conspiracy. Angelina Jolie stars as the mother of a kidnapped child; John Malkovich, Jeffrey Donovan, Amy Ryan, and Colm Feore co-star.

GREAT MEN (AND WOMEN)

Oliver Stone charts George W. Bush's path to power in "W." (Oct. 17), which stars Josh Brolin as the President, Elizabeth Banks as Laura Bush, and Richard Dreyfuss as Dick Cheney. ♦ Harvey Milk, the San Francisco supervisor who was the city's first openly gay elected official and who was assassinated in 1978, is the subject of "Milk" (Nov. 26), a bio-pic by Gus Van Sant, starring Sean Penn, Emile Hirsch, and James Franco. ♦ Diane English directs an update of George Cukor's 1939 classic "The Women," starring Jada Pinkett Smith, Meg Ryan, Candice Bergen, Annette Bening, Eva Mendes, and a host of other actresses (Sept. 12).

CULTURE CLASH

With "Towelhead" (Sept. 12), a drama about an Arab-American teen-ager who is sent to live with her deeply religious father, Alan Ball makes his directorial début; Summer Bishil and Aaron Eckhart star. ♦ In "Humboldt County" (Sept. 26), written and directed by Darren Grodsky and Danny Jacobs, a straitlaced medical student (Jeremy Strong) lands in a community of pot growers.

VICKY CRISTINA BARCELONA

Woody Allen's new movie has an easy, flowing vitality to it, a sun-drenched splendor that never falters. Two American girls go off to Barcelona for the summer—Vicky (Rebecca Hall), who is intelligent, skeptical, cautious, and thoroughly engaged to a corporate lawyer in New York, and Cristina (Scarlett Johansson), who is more adventurous than her friend but unformed and easily dissatisfied, a seeker without a lodestar. In the magnificent city, they meet Juan Antonio (Javier Bardem), a painter who is incapable of spending a night alone. Both women get involved with him, and the movie becomes a complicated triangle that forms, breaks apart, and reforms, as well as a lengthy exploration of the eternal struggle between security and passion, dependency and anarchic freedom. Juan Antonio's former wife, Maria Elena (Penélope Cruz), who is highly intelligent and artistically talented but so tempestuous that she creates havoc wherever she goes, crashes into the movie and busts everything apart. The American girls yearn for something more than bourgeois stability, but Allen means for us to understand that a life of passion alone can lead to craziness and violence. Shot in sumptuous gold and ochre colors by Javier Aguirresarobe.—*D.D.* (8/11 & 18/08) (In wide release.)

WALL-E

It has the waggish adorableness and the tripping-and-falling roughhouse of other animated films, but it's also a work of tragic nostalgia. In the first half, WALL-E, a robotic trash collector and compactor, continues to go about his duties after the human presence has been blown away from Earth by billowing waves of noxious dust. He trolls among the detritus of the vanished culture, fetishizing such junk items as plastic forks, hubcaps, and a tape of the lumbering musical "Hello, Dolly!," which provides him with models of human connection and such oddities as singing and dancing. A robot named EVE—she looks like a hovering white plastic egg designed by Steve Jobs's gang in Cupertino—lands on Earth; he woos her, and then accompanies her to a space station called the Axiom, where, it turns out, the remaining humans have been living for seven hundred years in a totalitarian pleasure garden run by a giant big-box-store company. "WALL-E" blends two kinds of science fiction—the postapocalyptic disaster movie and the dystopian fantasy derived from Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," in which people are controlled not by coercion but by pleasure. It's also a satire on the engulfing tendencies of consumer capitalism. From the Pixar division of Disney. Directed by Andrew Stanton.—*D.D.* (7/21/08) (In wide release.)

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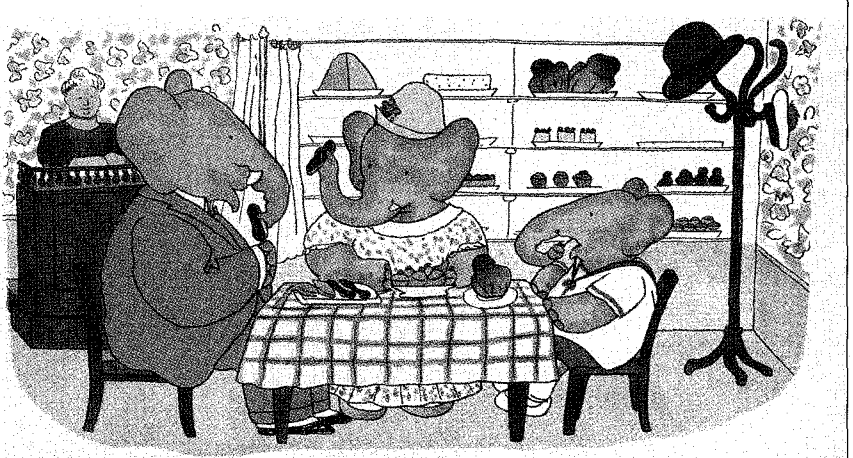
ABOVE AND BEYOND • FALL PREVIEW



THE MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

THE CLOTHES MAKE THE ELEPHANT
Four years ago, the Morgan Library & Museum acquired the early drafts, sketches, and watercolors for the first Babar book, Jean de Brunhoff's "Histoire de Babar, le Petit Éléphant," published in 1931. Beginning Sept. 19, the library is putting on display a hundred and seventy-five works by Brunhoff and his son Laurent, who continued the series after his father's death, in 1937. The exhibition also features the drafts of Laurent's first effort, "Babar et Ce Coquin d'Arthur." A number of public events are planned, including a lecture about the French imagination by the *New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik, on Nov. 6, and an illustrated talk by the exhibit's curator, Christine Nelson, on Nov. 21. (Madison Ave. at 36th St. 212-685-0008. Through Jan. 4.)

YADDO YADDO YADDO
The Humanities and Social Sciences Library has delved deep into its archives of material from the legendary artists' retreat for the exhibition "Yaddo: Making American Culture." Letters, papers, photographs, and ephemera from the compound, which opened in 1926 and which has been a haven for the likes of James Baldwin, Flannery O'Connor, Aaron Copland, Leonard Bernstein, and Sylvia Plath, will be on display. (Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 212-592-7730. Oct. 24-Feb. 15.)

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?
The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, in Cleveland, has typically held its induction ceremony each year in New York City. Beginning this November, though, it will have a more permanent presence here, when it opens an annex in SoHo. The space will have an "immersive theatre," where film clips of triumphant moments in rock will be screened, and will feature displays of artifacts from the local music scene (such as the bathroom stalls from the recently closed C.B.G.B. and David Byrne's giant suit). Visitors will be given headphones so that they can listen to everything from 50 Cent and the Notorious B.I.G. to the Velvet Underground and Billy Joel as they move through the space. (76 Mercer St. www.rockannex.com.)

READINGS, TALKS, AND TOURS
Sept. 15: Tony Kushner, Meryl Streep, James Gandolfini, Dave Eggers, Spike Jonze, and others celebrate the life and work of Maurice Sendak at the 92nd Street Y. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ Oct. 1: Salman Rushdie, the editor of "The Best American Short Stories 2008," kicks off the new season of "Selected Shorts." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.) ♦ The Poetry Society of America and the New School mark the publication of the Library of America's new book "Elizabeth Bishop: Poems, Prose and Letters" with a reading on Oct. 30 at the New School. Jonathan Galassi, Katha Pollitt, Honor Moore, and Vijay Seshadri are among those who are expected to participate. (www.poetrysociety.org.) ♦ Dec. 10: Rick Moody talks with Tom Wolfe about his seminal exposé of the counterculture, "The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test." (Symphony Space.)

Also Playing

THE HOUSE BUNNY: In wide release. **THE LONGSHOTS:** In wide release. **THE ROCKER:** In wide release. **STEP BROTHERS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Tribute to Richard Widmark." Aug. 27 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Street with No Name" (1948, William Keighley). ♦ "New York Korean Film Festival." All films are in Korean. Aug. 29 at 7: "Once Upon a Time in Corea" (2008, Jeong Yong-ki). ♦ Aug. 29 at 9:30: "My Father" (2007, Hwang Dong-hyuk). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4: "Going by the Book" (2007, Ra Hee-chan). ♦ Aug. 30 at 6:30: "Le Grand Chef" (2007, Jeon Yoon-soo). ♦ Aug. 30 at 9:15: "Epitaph" (2007, Jeong Beom-sik). ♦ Aug. 31 at 4: "With a Girl of Black Soil" (2007, Jean Soo-il). ♦ Aug. 31 at 6:30: "Hwang Jin-Yi" (2007, Chang Youn-hyun). ♦ Aug. 31 at 9:15: "May 18" (2007, Kim Ji-hoon). ♦ Films by John Carpenter. Sept. 1 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Big Trouble in Little China" (1986). ♦ Sept. 2 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Thing" (1982).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"The French Crime Wave." All films are in French. Aug. 27 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:50: "Diabolique" (1955, Henri-Georges Clouzot). ♦ Aug. 27 at 3:40 and 7:45: "Eyes Without a Face" (†). ♦ Aug. 28 at 3:25 and 7:35: "The Sicilian Clan" (1969, Henri Verneuil). ♦ Aug. 28 at 1:30, 5:40, and 9:50: "Un Flic" (1972, Jean-Pierre Melville). ♦ Aug. 29-30 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Elevator to the Gallows" (1957, Louis Malle). ♦ Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Band of Outsiders" (1964, Godard). ♦ Sept. 2 at 1, 4:50, and 8:40: "Casque d'Or" (1952, Jacques Becker). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2:50, 6:40, and 10:30: "Goupi Mains Rouges" (†).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Aug. 29-Sept. 1 at 11 A.M.: "Smiles of a Summer Night" (†). ♦ Aug. 29-Sept. 4 (call for showtimes): "Day of Wrath" (1943, Carl Theodor Dreyer; in Danish). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Aug. 29-31: "Mondo Hollywood" (1967, Robert Carl Cohen).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving." Aug. 27-29 at 1:30: "The Return of Don Camillo" (1953, Julien Duvivier; in Italian). ♦ The films of Joel and Ethan Coen. Aug. 27 at 6: "Fargo" (1996). ♦ Aug. 27 at 8: "The Big Lebowski" (1998). ♦ Aug. 28 at 6: "The Man Who Wasn't There" (2001). ♦ Aug. 28 at 8:30: "No Country for Old Men" (2007). ♦ "Chris Smith: American Original." Aug. 29 at 6:30 and Aug. 30 at 2:30: "American Job" (1996). ♦ Aug. 29 at 8:30 and Aug. 31 at 5:15: "American Movie" (†). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4 and Aug. 31 at 1: "Home Movie" (2001). ♦ Aug. 30 at 5:30 and Sept. 1 at 3: "The Yes Men" (2003). ♦ Sept. 1 at 5: "The Pool" (2007).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The films of Roberto Gavaldón. Except where noted, all films are in Spanish. Aug. 27 at 2:15 and Aug. 28 at 8:20: "Rosauro Castro" (1950). ♦ Aug. 27 at 4:15: "Autumn Days" (1963). ♦ Aug. 27 at 6:15: "La Barraca" (1945). ♦ Aug. 27 at 8:20: "The Golden Cockerel" (1964). ♦ Aug. 28 at 2:15: "Rosa Blanca" (1961/1972). ♦ Aug. 28 at 4:15: "The Littlest Outlaw" (1955; in English). ♦ Aug. 28 at 6:15: "Macario" (1960). ♦ The films of Charlton Heston. Aug. 29 at 1:30 and 6:15: "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles). ♦ Aug. 29 at 3:45 and 9:15 and Aug. 31 at 9:10: "Soylent Green" (1973, Richard Fleischer). ♦ Aug. 30 at 1 and Sept. 1 at 3:15: "The Greatest Show on Earth" (1952, Cecil B. De Mille). ♦ Aug. 30 at 4: "Major Dundee" (1965, Sam Peckinpah). ♦ Aug. 30 at 6:30 and Sept. 1 at 1: "Will Penny" (1968, Tom Gries). ♦ Aug. 30 at 8:45: "The Omega Man" (1971, Boris Sagal). ♦ Aug. 31 and Sept. 2 at 1: "Ben-Hur" (1959, William Wyler). ♦ Aug. 31 at 5: "Planet of the Apes" (1968, Franklin J. Schaffner). ♦ Aug. 31 at 7:15: "Beneath the Planet of the Apes" (1970, Ted Post). ♦ Sept. 1 at 6:15: "El Cid" (†).

READINGS AND TALKS

ALEXANDRA KERRY
John Kerry's daughter reads from her new book about her father's Presidential campaign, "Notes from the Trail: A View on Politics Through the Windshield." (Barnes & Noble, 97 Warren St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 2 at 7.)

LANSING LAMONT
Lamont, a longtime correspondent for *Time*, reads from his memoir, "You Must Remember This: A Reporter's Odyssey from Camelot to Glasnost." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 2 at 7.)

WYNTON MARSALIS
The trumpeter discusses his new book, "Moving to Higher Ground: How Jazz Can Change Your Life," in the company of his co-author, Geoffrey C. Ward. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary. Sept. 2 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

GREAT NORTH RIVER TUGBOAT RACE AND COMPETITION
The powerful little helpers that coax giant ocean-going vessels into and out of their berths and haul barges of fuel oil and other necessities around New York Harbor get a moment in the spotlight. Some twenty boats will be on hand, including the historic W. O. Decker, from the South Street Seaport. The festivities start with a parade of tugs in the Hudson (accompanied by fireboats), starting at Pier 84, followed by a race, bow-to-bow pushing contests, and other tests of captains' skill and work-boat proficiency. (Aug. 31, starting at 10 A.M. For more information, visit www.workingharbor.org.)

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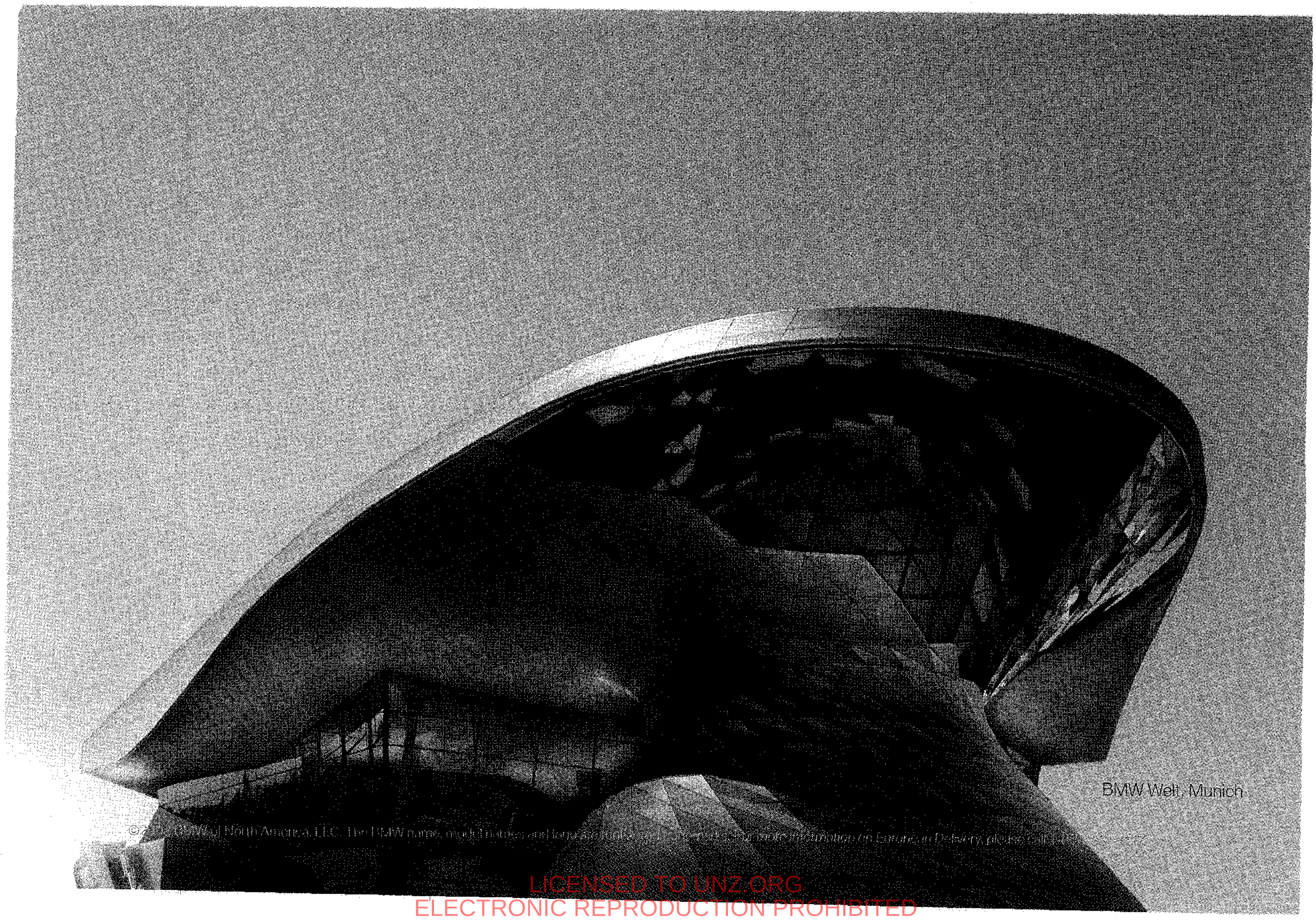

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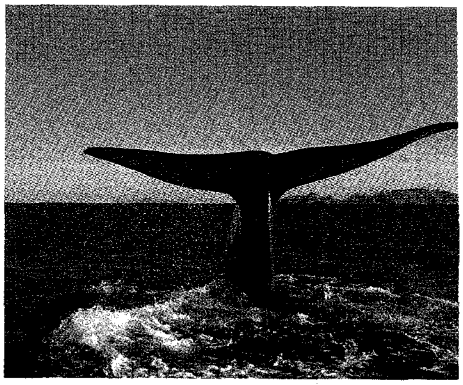

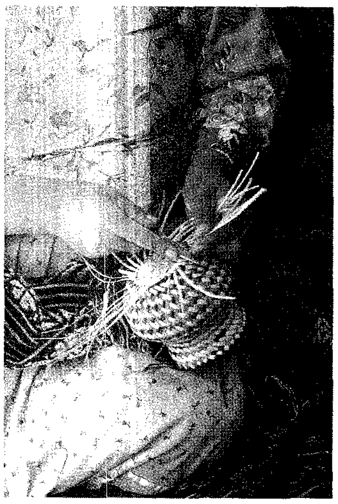

Detours to Adventure

The Copper Canyon Railway in northwestern Mexico offers one of the world's most spectacular train rides. For four hundred miles, from Chihuahua to the Pacific coast, it winds through the Sierra Madre Occidental, hugging mountainsides and canyon rims, climbing to steel-blue lakes and dipping into cave-sculpted ravines. Yet the scenery only gets more interesting when you exit on whistle-stops to explore by foot, horseback, or mountain bike. And this is the key to adventure throughout Mexico: detour to the routes less traveled to find paths of discovery barely charted.

To interact with the terrain traversed by the train, choose a switchback mountain-bike descent some four thousand feet to the base of **Batopilas Canyon**, where a nineteenth-century silver-mining settlement will make you feel as if you've fallen out of time. Or hike the challenging paths into **Urique Canyon**, the deepest in the area, or up to **Cascada de Basaséachi**, Mexico's second highest waterfall. Along the way you'll encounter some of the fifty thousand Tarahumaras who occupy the daunting geology as their ancestors did, some still making their homes in the caves.

Almost halfway down the Baja California Peninsula, about five hundred miles north of Los Cabos, **El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve** stretches about six million acres from the Pacific Ocean to the Sea of Cortés. In its protected lagoons of San Ignacio and Ojo de Liebre, migrating gray whales give birth every year to some nine hundred calves. In season, from January to March, set out on a whale-watching boat tour from the historic town of **San Ignacio**. Then embark on a hike or mule trip year-round to cave-art sites in the **Sierra de San Francisco**, where the landscape is desert but some paintings depict whales—giving visitors a ten-thousand-year-old scenic link.

The mist-shrouded hillside city of **Xalapa**, near the Gulf Coast, offers a contrasting climate. For rafters, it is a gateway to the excitement of the **Antigua River** and the intrigue of the **Filobobos River**, which is the best route to the archaeological sites of **El Cuajilote** and **Vega de la Peña**. Hikers, glimpsing the fourteen-thousand-foot summit of the extinct volcano **Cofre de Perote** on the horizon, will also want to ascend Mexico's eighth-highest peak.

On the Yucatán Peninsula, timelessness envelops you. Discover the herons and spoonbills living in the bays and swamps of the million-acre **Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve**. From the Mayan village of Punta Allen, about two hours south of Tulum, begin a fly-fishing quest for bonefish, tarpon, and jack in the reserve's saltwater lagoons. Or rent a kayak, with or without a guide, to paddle among the mangrove channels that served as Mayan trade routes more than a millennium ago.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COPPER CANYON ©WHIT RICHARDSON/ALAMY; MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY, XALAPA ©SARA SCHARF; SEA OF CORTÉS BLUE WHALE ©TUI DE ROY/GETTY IMAGES; TARAHUMARA BASKET WEAVER ©DANITA DELIMONT/ALAMY; CASCADA DE BASASÉACHI ©ALEJANDRA GARCÍA CARRILLO

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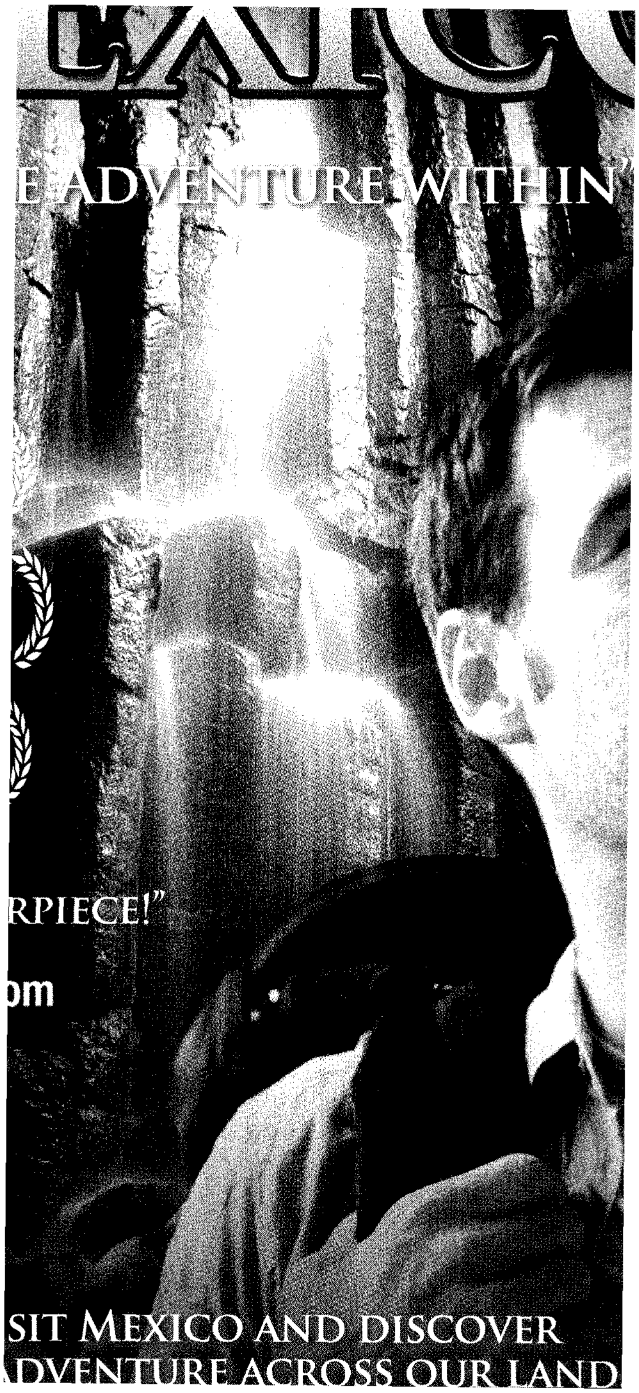
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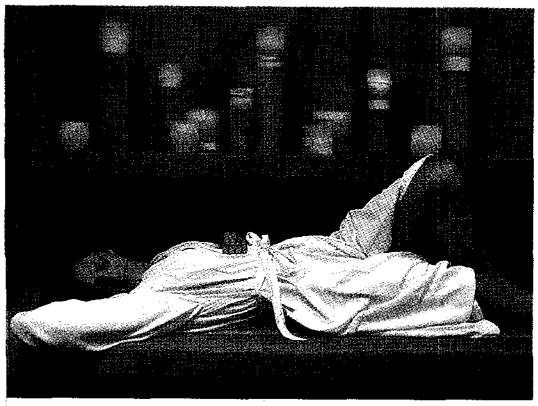
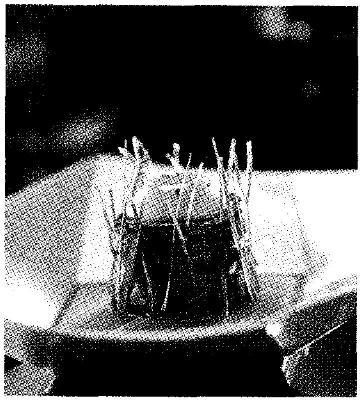
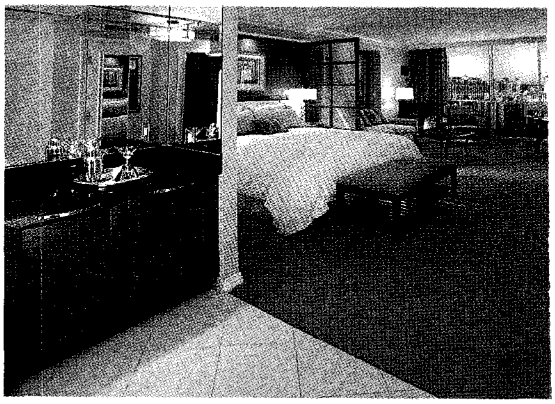


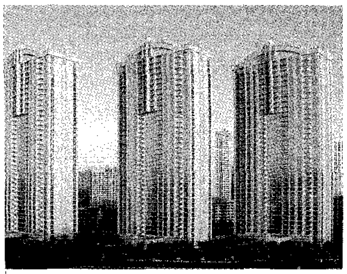




THE SIGNATURE AT MGM GRAND
SUITE LIFE

Travelers who yearn for the best possible Las Vegas experience find it at The Signature at MGM Grand, a distinctive row of three golden towers adjacent to the Las Vegas Strip. Every suite in these towers offers the comforts of a luxurious apartment. Many have balconies overlooking either the Strip or the mountains. The Signature at MGM Grand accords a serenity previously unknown to Las Vegas visitors. Drive through the private gated entrance, and valet your car with ease. In the intimate lobby, the key card to your private retreat awaits.

Every smoke-free suite is designed to meet the needs of those who visit for pleasure as well as those who come to conduct business. Two-line phones, high-speed Wi-Fi, and a lobby business center with computer workstations and other office necessities make it a perfect destination for the business traveler. And the excitement of MGM Grand's "maximum Vegas"—the casino, the gourmet cuisine at award-winning restaurants, exhilarating night life, the indulgent Grand Spa and Cristophe Salon, and the nearly seven-acre Grand Pool complex—is just steps away.



The Signature suites' multiple HDTVs, DVD/CD players, and iPod-compatible clock radios make every guest feel like a media mogul. The spacious marble bathrooms are true refuges with whirlpool tubs, flat-screen TVs, and June Jacobs amenities favored by spa-goers. Although room service is available around the clock, there's a Starbucks as well as a gourmet deli on the Signature premises. Suites are also equipped with Sub-Zero, Miele, and Bosch kitchen appliances.

TO DINE...OR TO FEAST?

Given the many dining options at MGM Grand, using the kitchen may not be necessary. The 2008 *Michelin* guide gave its highest rating, three stars, to Joël Robuchon at the MGM Grand, which it calls "perfection on a plate." Other dining destinations include Wolfgang Puck's California-inspired cuisine and Emeril Lagasse's signature blend of Creole-Cajun specialties. Craftsteak, by Chef Tom Colicchio, offers mainstays like Kobe beef along with veal, salmon, and lobster dishes prepared with the purest ingredients from small family farms. Seablue, by Michael Mina, is inspired by the bustling ports and marketplaces of the Mediterranean and is noted for its two open kitchens, which prepare seafood over wood-fired grills. Nobhill, also by Mina, has a popular bar and lounge that captures the look and feel of a top-flight San Francisco eatery. Still more restaurants include the sleek Fiamma Trattoria & Bar, and Pearl, which serves cuisine inspired by Canton and Shanghai.

From unparalled accommodations and a luxurious spa, to fine cuisine presented by the world's greatest living chefs, The Signature at MGM Grand provides the perfect balance of energy, escape, and indulgence.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MGM GRAND

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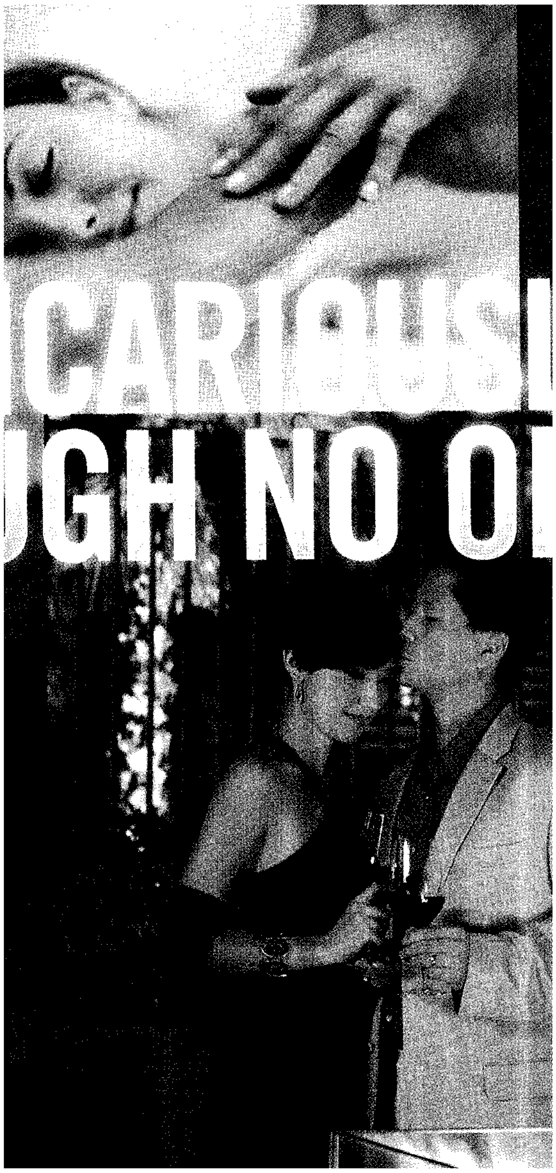
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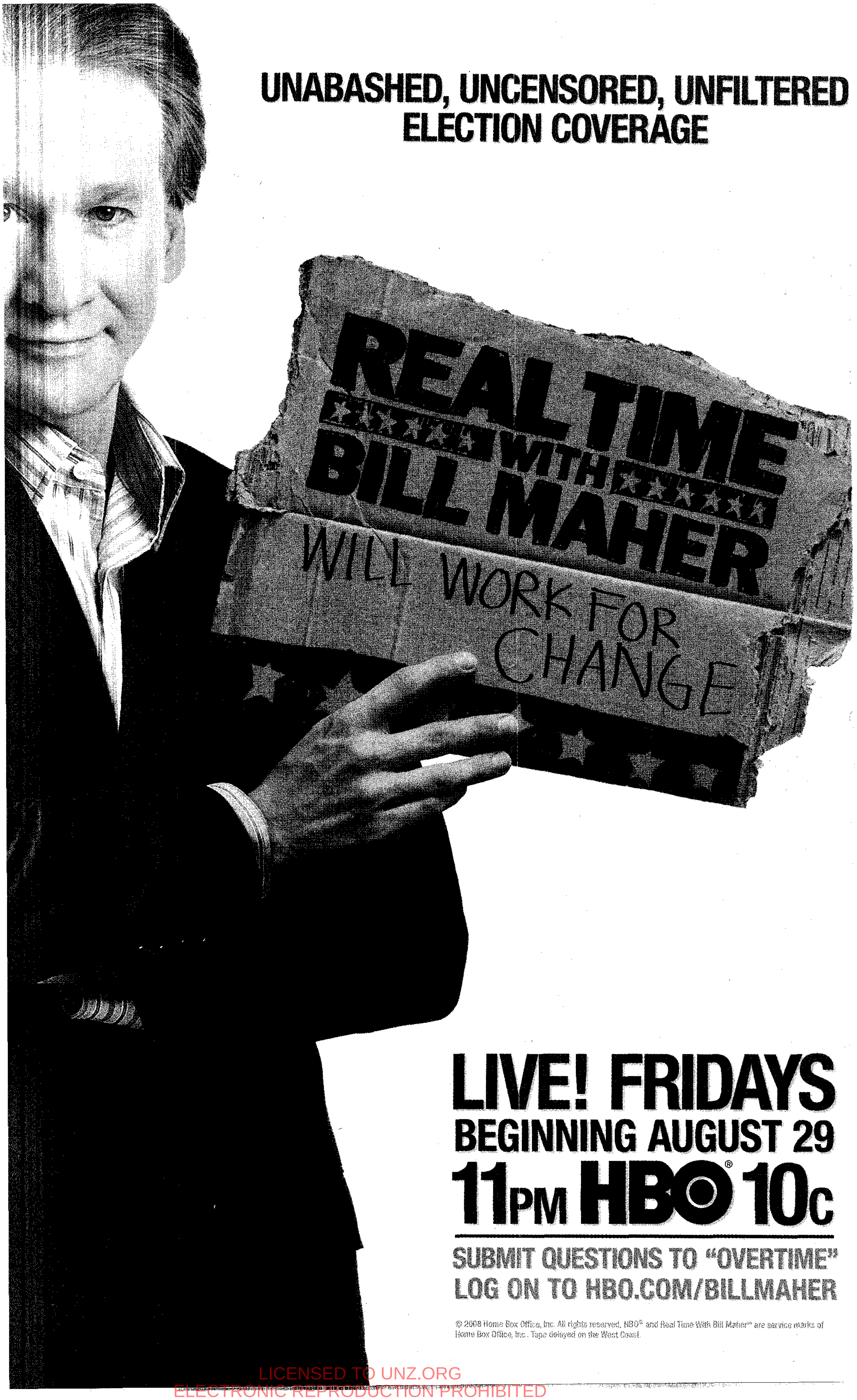
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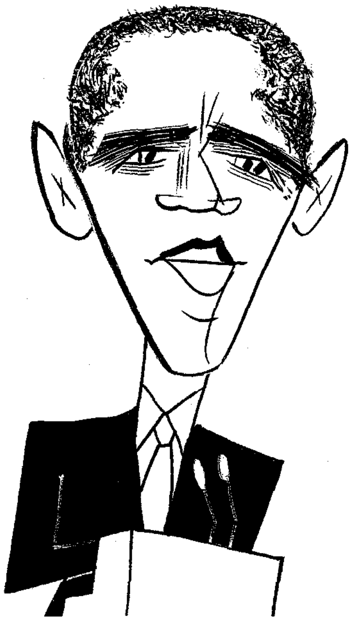
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
ATTACK-DOG DAYS

The week before the week before this week's scheduled gathering of the delegates and their media camp followers in Denver, the nominee-presumptive of the Democratic Party did something that is strongly recommended, and ought to be mandatory, for anyone who has just logged a year and a half's worth of eighteen-hour days travelling in airplanes, making speeches, shaking hands with tens of thousands of strangers, answering numbingly repetitive questions, fending off attacks on everything from his position on insurance mandates to his alleged similarity to Paris Hilton, and trying to remember what it feels like to get a good night's sleep: Barack Obama went on vacation. He did this in Hawaii, one of the fifty United States of America. Not only is Hawaii amply supplied with beaches, sunshine, hotels, and other features useful to vacationers (tourism is the state's largest industry); it is also where Obama was born and went to high school, and it is the only place he can visit his eighty-five-year-old grandmother, who still occupies the apartment they shared when she was helping rear him. To summarize, Obama took a break. But he wasn't given one. "Going off this week to vacation in Hawaii does not make any sense whatsoever," Cokie Roberts, one of the resident sourpusses on ABC's "This Week with George Stephanopoulos," complained. "I know his grandmother lives in Hawaii, and I know Hawaii is a state, but it has the look of him going off to some sort of foreign, exotic place. He should be in Myrtle Beach, you know, if he's going to take a vacation at this time"—birthplace and grandma be damned.

On the other hand, the proposition that Obama vacationed in Hawaii is at least factually true. The same cannot be said for the contents of "The Obama Nation," by Jerome R. Corsi, Ph.D., which, thanks to bulk purchases, has been the No. 1 New York *Times* best-seller for three weeks. The tired pun of the book's title is a rare instance of hard-right truth in labelling. On a foundation of small, medium-sized, and extra-large falsehoods, "The Obama Nation" erects a superstructure of innuendo, guilt by (often nonexistent) association, baseless speculation, and sinister-sounding but irrelevant digression. The result is an example of what used to be known, in the glory days of ideologically driven totalitarianism, as the Big Lie—in this case, a fabricated, alternate-universe Barack Obama, who, we are told or invited to infer, is a corrupt, enraged, anti-American, drug-dealing, anti-Israel, pseudo-Christian radical leftist, black militant, plagiarist, and liar, trained as a Muslim and mentored by a menagerie of Marxists, Communists, crypto-Communists, and terrorists.



The fabrications and distortions in "The Obama Nation" have been patiently enumerated and refuted by Media Matters and other watchdog Web sites; "Fight the Smears," a section of Obama's site, has a fairly complete compilation. The exercise is an absolutely necessary one, but the point-by-point approach can leave the impression of quibbling over details. The problem for Obama isn't little lies. It's the big one.

Corsi won his first dollop of fame four years ago, as the co-author of another best-selling tissue of lies, "Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry." The moral depravity of that book was matched by its physical slovenliness. It looked as if it had been laid out on a teen-ager's home computer, it was barely literate, and it was padded with large type, wide margins, and redundant appendixes. The sole raison d'être of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

its publisher, Regnery, is the promulgation of hard-right politics. "The Obama Nation," on the other hand, has been published by Threshold Editions, an imprint of Simon & Schuster. It is a professional job, and it has evidently benefitted from professional help. In a typical passage, the harsh taste of poison is artificially sweetened by a dose of solemn, ersatz thoughtfulness:

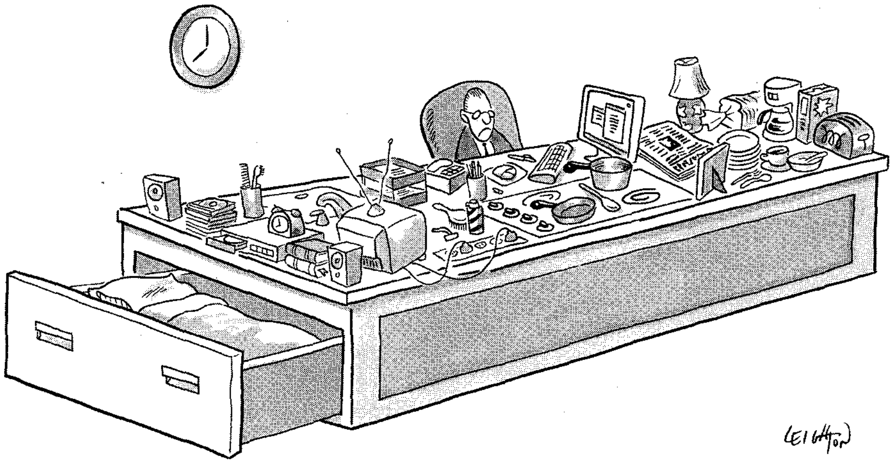
> Our argument is that Obama's experience with Islam predisposes him to Islam in a way that is reflective of his political associates, his political advisors, and his specific policies regarding the Middle East. This is a very different argument than to claim Obama is a Muslim, something no one can prove one way or the other, except for Obama himself.

Corsi himself is a crackpot, a boor, and a bigot. He wrote a book last year accusing the Bush Administration, the Council on Foreign Relations, and assorted liberals of plotting to subsume the United States into a North American superstate with its own currency, the "amero"; he helped fuel a theory, popular with slivers of the far right and the far left, that the World Trade Center collapse on 9/11 was caused by explosives planted in the buildings; on a malarial right-wing Web site called FreeRepublic.com, he called Hillary Clinton "a lesbo," Muslims "ragheads," and John Kerry, Bill Clinton, Katie Couric, and John Lennon "communists" ("a dead communist," in the Beatle's case), and wrote that "boy buggering in both Islam and Catholicism is okay with the Pope"—meaning John Paul II, whom he derided as "senile"—"as long as it isn't reported by the liberal press." All of which is to say that Corsi is, or ought to be, a marginal figure. But Mary Matalin, the editor-in-chief of Threshold Editions, is not a marginal Republican. She is a former chief of staff of the Republican National Committee, and she served in the current Administration as an Assistant to the President, the White House staff's shiniest title. Nor is Simon & Schuster—which, seventeen years ago, gave a book contract to a young man who had been elected the first African-American president of the *Harvard Law Review*—a marginal publisher. But its standards have evidently slipped now that, along with CBS, MTV, and Paramount, it is part of Sumner Redstone's National Amusements, Inc.

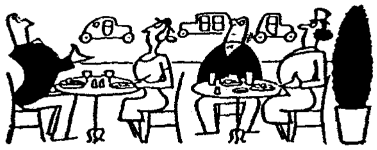
The Corsi book does its real damage on the air, via the sprawling conservative slander industry. The book, its author, and its claims are in heavy rotation on Fox News and the talk-radio programs of Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, Laura Ingraham, and their hundreds of imitators. There is no Democratic equivalent, and, because these broadcasters have no formal connection with the Republican Party or with John McCain, their unending campaign of character assassination against Obama affords the Party and its presumptive nominee the gift of deniability. Even so, McCain has increasingly embraced their methods. At the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention last week, he accused Obama of placing the nation's security below "the ambition to be President." Before the same audience the following day, Obama said he had "never suggested, and never will, that Senator McCain picks his positions on national security based on politics or personal ambition," adding, "I believe that he genuinely wants to serve America's national interest. Now it's time for him to acknowledge that I want to do the same."

That should clear up any doubts about whether Obama is a Christian. But a soft answer does not always turn away wrath. At the Democratic Convention four years ago, John Kerry, heeding focus groups in which "negativity" was deplored, made the colossal mistake of discouraging discouraging words about George W. Bush. If the character of a campaign reflects the character of its candidate, then John McCain's character is not above criticism. In Denver this week, Obama and the Democrats had better hold McCain and the Republicans accountable, not only for the moral, strategic, and material disasters of the past eight years but also for the viciousness of their method of clinging to power. If they do, perhaps Barack Obama will be able to take his next vacation at Camp David.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*



MEAN STREETS
TEST DRIVE



Congestion pricing or not, the Bloomberg administration is impressively committed to altering the flow of traffic through the center city. Such is its determination, in fact, that it has now reduced Broadway, the original Manhattan highway, to a series of what the Department of Transportation is calling "pedestrian living rooms." From Times Square to Herald Square, the blacktop has been decreased by a third, replaced on the eastern side with a pebbly mixture of light-colored gravel and epoxy that could pass, from the upper deck of a CitySights tour bus, for a jute rug. (Think of the inevitable flattened chewing-gum spots as red-wine stains.) Tables and chairs and umbrellas will be arranged to form makeshift cafés in the middle of the street. A green bike lane separates the domesticated zones from the curb, like a moat patrolled by speeding bicycle messengers.

"This is Broadway Boulevard," Barbara Randall, the executive director of the Fashion Center Business Improvement District, said last week, while standing in the center of what used to be, simply, Broadway, at Forty-first Street. Randall's B.I.D. is responsible for the gardening and the interior decorating along the boulevard, and she was surrounded by dozens of giant flower pots and boxes,

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marked "Live Plants," that had been trucked in from Long Island. "Every now and then, you get the New York Naysayer," she said. "This morning, I was walking to work and I stopped to talk to one of my guys, and a naysayer came along. He said, 'You're crazy. I can't believe you're doing this. Somebody's going to get hit by a car.' And I said, 'Well, you know, no place in New York is exempt from getting hit by a car.' So then he starts telling me, 'No, a truck's going to plow through here,' and I gave him my whole speech about how these are going to be full of dirt—very, very heavy." She gestured toward the pots, which will double as protective walls, before continuing. "And he said, 'You're an optimist.' "

Randall began walking south, past employees who were bolting blue benches to the ground within easy sniffing distance of idling-truck exhaust, and past countless unopened bags of potting soil. (One of the gardeners was less optimistic when asked about the green-painted bike lane: "They say green is the most calming color, but I don't think most people around here want to be calm.") At Thirty-ninth Street, she came upon a D.O.T. project manager named Sean Quinn, who explained that the "pebble-like surface" was guaranteed to last for five years. "Tourists can observe the real New Yorkers in their daily grind," he said. (A description on the D.O.T.'s Web site reads, "No reservation needed, free front-row seating will be available to Broadway's Sidewalk Catwalk Fashion Show.") The models on this runway, then, may head south from the Gap, at Forty-second Street, or north from Macy's. Dining is B.Y.O., for the time being, but takeout from the Mr. Broadway Kosher Restaurant offers the added benefit of spotting black-hatted Hasidim.

"Someone asked me, 'You actually think people are going to sit in the middle of the street drinking coffee?' " Randall said. "I'm, like, 'Yeah, I really think they will. New Yorkers sit anywhere.' " A few blocks north, at the so-called Crossroads of the World, where, on Armistice Day in 1918, Enrico Caruso sang from the balcony of the Knickerbocker Hotel, a man was slumped against the Gap holding a cardboard sign that read, "Why lie? I need a beer!" A group of break-dancers sat on buckets on the sidewalk. Tour-bus pamphleteers and *Daily News* hawkers jostled for pole position in front of the subway stairs. Suddenly, a couple of chairs began to seem like a welcome respite from the mayhem, so a pair of locals lugged their own from a nearby office building, for a test run and a bite.

"You're very brave," a woman said, crossing the street in front of them, as several fire engines, sirens blaring, struggled to make a left turn at Forty-second Street. (Caruso singing the "Marseillaise" it wasn't.)

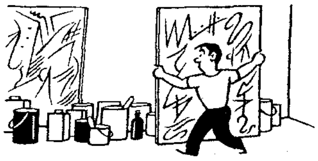
"I expect to see your faces covered in soot," a pedestrian said. Bicycles swerved heedlessly around the planters. Before long, a camera crew had descended to ask questions for a pop-culture survey. ("What did you think of Bernie Mac's death?") Another man talked into his cell phone while waiting for the light to change: "They closed half of Broadway. Bloomberg's ridiculous." The sunlight, at least, was ample.

Thus far, the begonias and impatiens and kalanchoes in the planters all looked to be intact. "If you'd put these out fifteen years ago, you'd have no plants by the next morning," Randall said. "I mean, everything would just disappear."

—*Ben McGrath*

STUDIO VISIT

LOST AND FOUND



The painter Kehinde Wiley first travelled to Nigeria in 1997. He was trying to find his father, whom he had never met, or, more crucially for a portraitist, *seen*. (His mother didn't have any photographs.) After several weeks in Lagos, he found his dad, who welcomed him. But—like any Telemachus or Luke Skywalker—Wiley, who was born in Los Angeles and lives in Brooklyn, was also looking for a sense of belonging, and his homecoming was not as seamless as he had dreamed. Still, the place has a pull on him. In December, he attended his half sister's wedding, in the city of Uyo. He brought his mother, who had not seen his father in thirty years.

A new show of ten of Wiley's paintings, entitled "The World Stage: Africa, Lagos~Dakar," opened recently at the Studio Museum in Harlem. ("The World Stage" is an ongoing series. Last year was China. Up next: India, Brazil.) His work from West Africa, Wiley has said, has "an extra dimension," but he admitted, the other day at his studio, in Greenpoint, that artistically his forays into the region were as trying as his personal ones. "The people, in general, were different physically—a lot taller, darker," he said. "I taught myself to paint African-Americans, mostly people roughly my skin tone." He pinched a biceps. "But there you're using blues instead of browns. I did some pretty shitty painting that didn't have the luminosity I'm obsessed with, that light popping off bodies, that brings a certain hopefulness to something." On the floor in front of an unfinished canvas was a Chinet paper plate, which Wiley had been using as a palette, smeared with autumny-colored oil paints, like the leftovers of a Thanksgiving dinner.

Throughout Wiley's career, he has used civilians, plucked from the sidewalk or the shopping mall, as sitters for his portraits, which are epic in scale and typically feature young, trendily dressed black men (do-rags, diamonds, N.B.A. jerseys) assuming the heroic postures of Van Dyck's and Velázquez's dukes and burghers (walking sticks, steeds). Street casting, and its serendipities, are a big part of his process. "I get some crazy responses," Wiley, who was barefoot and had on jeans and a T-shirt featuring a naked Barbie with door-knocker earrings, said. "People are, like, 'This is totally sleazy, what's up?' " For a show in Columbus, Ohio, a few years ago, accompanied by a documentary crew, he approached a group of guys sitting on a front porch. "As soon as we get out of the car, everyone just takes off running," Wiley recalled. "One of the cameramen suggested that they thought it was an episode of 'COPS.' "

Usually, Wiley lets his models choose their own poses: he takes them to his studio—which, like him, has a pop but learned feel, with NPR on the speakers, a fish tank, a taxidermied blue marlin, and, presiding over it all, Wiley's Italian greyhounds (Liza and Lord Compton, both wearing rhinestone collars)—and has them flip through art books until they find a template. Gainsborough can be a tough sell. "The Lady Innes portrait, the one of the woman holding a flower that's in the Frick Collection?" Wiley said. "I get a lot of straight-out,

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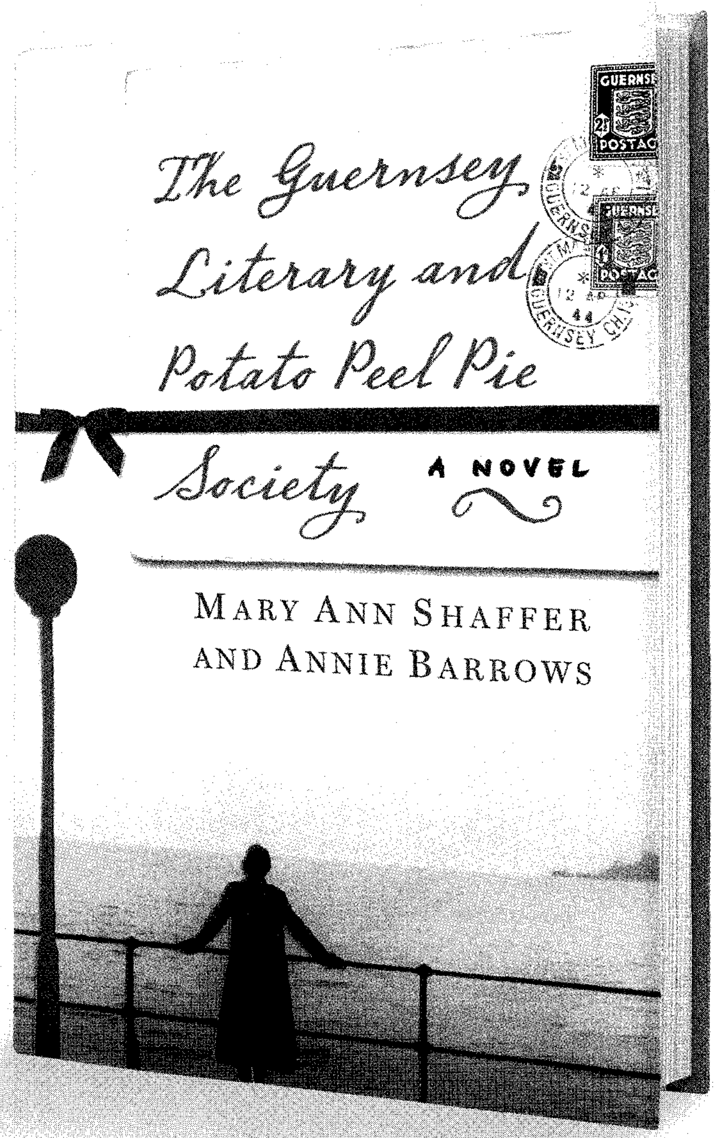
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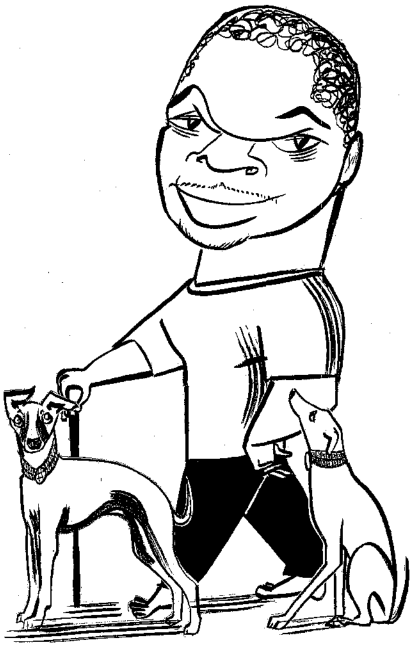
'I'm not doing that, because it's a girl.' "

Wiley said that Ice-T, who sat for him in 2005, was his most finicky subject. "He had the most shocking level of ego and excess," Wiley recalled. "It was me inviting these celebrities to be who they wanted to be, and he goes straight for a portrait of Napoleon. He was, like, 'If anyone deserves to be Napoleon, it's me. I'm the father of gangster rap.' So he crowned himself."

Wiley led the way to a computer monitor, where he pulled up an image of "Ibrahima Sacko, 2008," one of the portraits in the Studio Museum exhibit. It shows a boy of fifteen or sixteen—spiky dreadlets, knowing stare, soccer jersey—against an eye-popping backdrop of orange-and-black peacocks. His skin has a glow to it. Wiley had almost lost Ibrahima, whom he encountered as part of a music group performing on the beach in Nigeria. "We were halfway down the street, and one of his fellow-musicians snatched him back and said, 'What's our cut?' " Wiley recalled, as the dogs licked his toes. "Our fixer said, 'Look, don't ruin it for this guy.' "



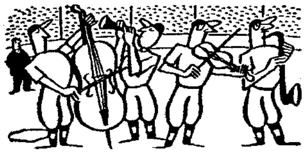
Kehinde Wiley

Wiley likes to invite his subjects to his openings, and his hope is that the new show will travel to Nigeria, though he's not sure how he'll track everyone down. A year after he painted eight young men in Columbus, all but one of them had disappeared.

—*Lauren Collins*

RAH-RAH DEPT.

GOOOOO, SPORTS!



Between the Mitchell Report and the N.F.L.'s Spygate affair, the image of sports as an arena of fun and fair competition has taken a hit lately. Even the Olympics' opening ceremonies were marred by a controversy over lip-synching. So the recent inauguration, in lower Manhattan, of the Sports Museum of America—a booster's repository of "everything from NASCAR to the Negro Leagues," as its founder, Philip Schwalb, likes to say—seemed a fitting rehabilitation project.

The celebration began, appropriately enough, with cheerleaders. A pompom crew from West Point gathered in Bowling Green, and chanted "A-R-M-Y." Nearby, a soccer-juggling troupe was interrupted by a cavorting group of mascots—some two dozen costumed creatures, from the New Jersey Devil to Big Red, Sacred Heart's oversized Daniel Boone. (Titus, an orange-and-blue thing that represents the Titans, the New York lacrosse team, was having a tough time heading the ball with its Darth Vaderish mask.)

Onstage, Mayor Bloomberg and a range of athletic stars, including Eli Manning, Mario Andretti, and Martina Navratilova, participated in an age-old sports tradition: spouting clichés.

"We had a coach and we had a dream," Jim Craig said of his 1980 gold-medal-winning hockey team. "Sports inspire," Bloomberg said. "They teach us an awful lot about respect and teamwork."

"Sports bring us together," Billie Jean King chimed in. "If you can see it, you can be it."

The athletes and the mascots entered the museum, which is housed in the old Standard Oil Building. In addition to the Heisman Trophy and hundreds of video screens, there were the sweat-stained gloves of the Olympic gymnast Dominique Dawes, photographs of the skateboarder Tony Hawk, and a Ziploc bag filled with brown soil. It was labelled, in Magic Marker, "Greece Dirt 2004." There were also lots of American flags and wall labels telling stories of perseverance in the face of adversity. There were no syringes or asterisks to be found.

"It's a lollapalooza!" Bud Collins, the seventy-nine-year-old tennis broadcaster, declared. Strolling through a section titled "Dreaming Big," which showed childhood photographs of athletes, Collins reminisced about his days as a boxing writer. He was wearing pants printed with pink boxing gloves and four large portraits of boxers. "I got these in Kinshasa in 1974," he said. "This is Muhammad Ali, and this is George Foreman. That was the Rumble in the Jungle. These are thirty-four years old. I only wear them on special occasions."

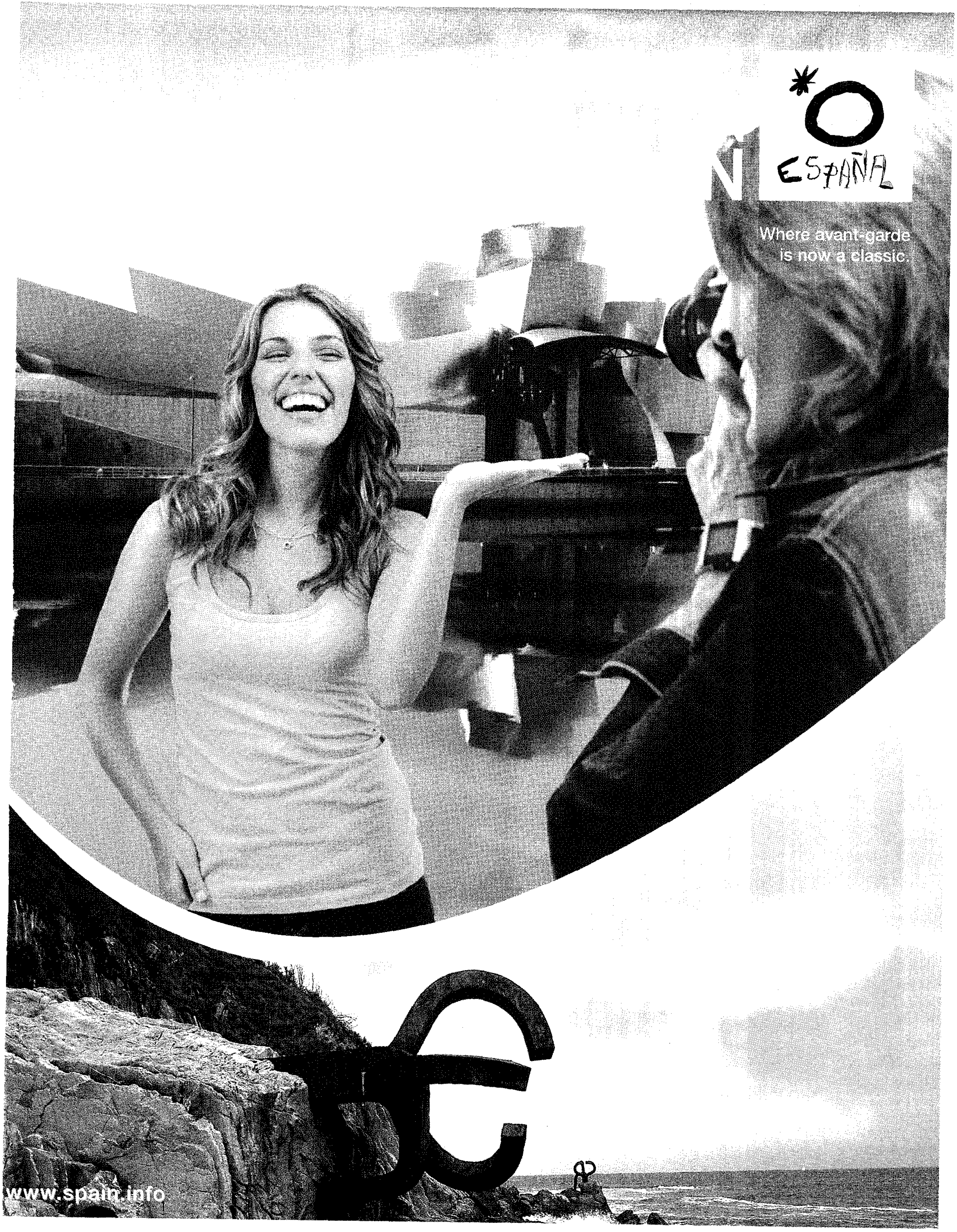
Of boxing itself, he said, "It's a terrible sport. A brutal sport. But it's wonderful to write about. I remember a guy named Lou Radzienda, a boxing commissioner in Chicago. I said to him, 'A lot of people think pro boxing should be banned,' and he said, 'That ain't not never gonna happen.' There are a lot of double negatives, but triple negatives are pretty rare."

Later on, Keyshawn Johnson, a former wide receiver for the Jets, held forth on memorabilia-collecting. "You name it, I have it," he said. "Tickets to games, and helmets and footballs and jerseys and trophies." He went on, "I have so much shit. I have a fifteen-hundred-square-foot gym in my house, and it's just all over the place in there." Johnson admired the Jimmie Johnson NASCAR display. "How'd they get that car in here?" he asked a guy in a red museum polo shirt. "Did they have to cut off the roof?"

"I don't know," the young man answered. "But they were afraid the floor wouldn't hold up, so they had to fix it." Johnson was quiet, perhaps considering the floor of his gymnasium.

Down in the lobby, a soul band played while athletes sipped cocktails with the museum's investors, who were hoping to cash in on the for-profit institution. Others, though, weren't too happy about the twenty-seven-dollar admission fee. "If you are scoring at home," the *Daily News* had noted, "that is $7 more than the Met or MoMA." But, then, sports wouldn't be sports if there were no corporate interests to deride.

—*Austin Kelley*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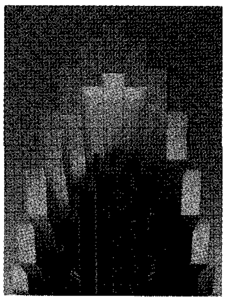

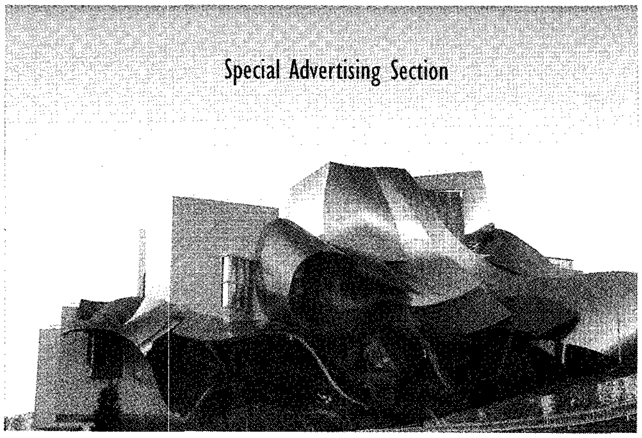

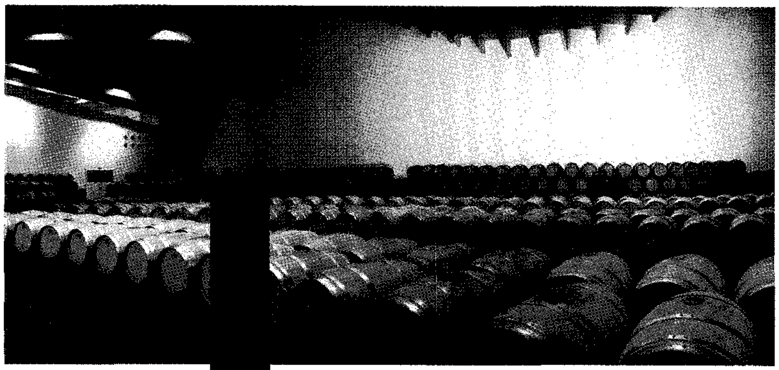

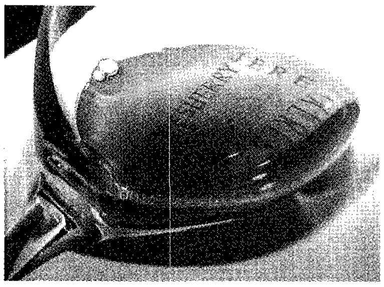

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Sample the pleasures of wine and grape-based therapies at the **Vino-Spa Lavida.** All manner of luxuries come together at the **Hotel Arzuaga**, where the Bodega Arzuaga cellars share premises with a restaurant and an antique- and tapestry-filled five-star hotel.

Head northwest to the Miño and Avia rivers and experience the famed white wines of **Ribeiro**, a counterpoint to the legendary Spanish big reds. Stay in one of the ten rooms at the eighteenth-century hotel, winery, and bistro **Casal de Armán.** While there, shop for the crystal-clear green-tinged gems at **Coto de Gomariz** and **Viña Costeira**. In springtime, tasting awaits at the **Ribeiro Wine Festival in Ribadavia** .

The course of the River Ebro, south of Bilbao, carries you to the hill-framed heart of Rioja country. This wine may be monolithic but it is never monotonous—a fact only underscored by the titanium-canopied Frank Gehry-designed **Ciudad de Vino**, a five-star hotel and wine-spa complex created for the 150-year-old **Marqués de Riscal** winery. Another architectural icon, **Bodega Ysios** winery, was designed by Santiago Calatrava.

But none of these dramatic creations would exist without the juice of the essential Tempranillo. Experience it in its finest fermented form at **La Bodega El Fabulista** winery, where wine is made the old-fashioned way, by stomping on the grape. **Dinastía Vivanco**, a thoroughly modern winery, houses La Rioja's **Museum of Wine Culture**, one of the world's largest wine museums dedicated to the history of viniculture.

The Guadalquivir River flows southwest about seventy miles from Seville to the "sherry triangle" near its mouth. The major sherry-producing town is **Jerez de la Frontera**, where intriguing stories behind the remarkable fortified wine are clarified at **El Misterio de Jerez** museum. A tour of **González Byass** is essential; the most visited winery complex in Europe, it cellars Tio Pepe Fino, a thirty-year-old Amontillado del Duque, and the rare 1979 Añada. The venerable **Osborne Winery** still blends its sherries, but now creates superb Riojas and Ribera del Dueros as well.

The **Pedro Domecq Winery** is one of the most beautiful in Spain, with Moorish arches and courtyards and panoramic views of the vineyards from its eighteenth-century castle. Domecq has been creating nothing but sherry since 1730, and its rare selections list offers a historical adventure that you and your cellar will be all the better for.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: YSIOS WINE VAULT ©STEVEN VAN VAERENBERGH; YSIOS DETAIL ©BOB MASTERS/ALAMY; MARQUÉS DE RISCAL ©LUIS SERRA; SHERRY GLASS ©SALVADOR DEL SAZ

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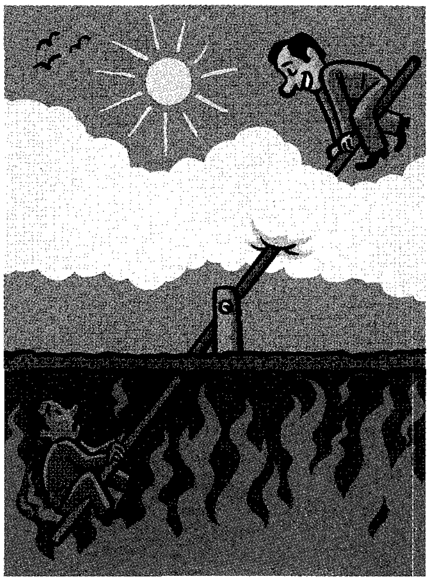
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THAT UNCERTAIN FEELING

American investors are frazzled. True, oil prices have fallen from their most vertiginous highs, the dollar is a bit stronger, and the stock market has actually risen over the past month. But none of those things have happened in a smooth and steady fashion. The stock market's "ascent," in particular, has come straight out of "Sybil." Since the beginning of July, there have been six days on which the S. & P. 500 has gone up or down by at least two per cent, and daily moves of more than one per cent—like the ones we saw at the start of last week—have come to seem practically routine. Precipitous falls in the market have frequently been followed immediately by sharp rallies, and vice versa. And, while some of these moves have been occasioned by real news, more often it's been impossible to tell just what made investors so damn exuberant or so gloomy.

Not that long ago, stock-market volatility appeared to be a thing of the past; between the end of 2003 and the end of 2006 there were only two days with moves of two per cent. But, ever since the credit crisis began, big moves have become common. The conventional explanation for this is "uncertainty": investors' sense of what the future holds is in constant flux, so stock prices are, too. But, in the dearth of new news, you might expect uncertainty to result in tentative oscillations, rather than in the huge waves of buying and selling that we've been seeing. In this market, the same traders who on Tuesday seem convinced that the apocalypse is nigh are, on Wednesday, just as sure that we've weathered the storm. If investors are unsure about tomorrow, why are they acting so certain about today?

Much of what's happening is a function of what economists call "herding." In conditions of uncertainty, humans, like other animals, herd together for protection. In unstable markets, this leads to trend-following: buy when others buy, sell when they sell. Many studies have found that mutual-fund managers herd, for a couple of important reasons. First, herding offers money managers the reassurance that their performance, whether good or bad, won't diverge too much from the norm. It also gives them a chance to piggyback on the knowledge of their competitors. That's why, when a stock starts to rise, traders often assume that there must be a good reason, and therefore buy in order not to miss the party. This can create a feedback loop: as more people buy the stock, the more certain others become that there must be a good reason to do so (even if they don't know what that is). And these feedback loops have been accentuated by the spread of quantitative-trading strategies that explicitly aim at riding the herd effect. These strategies can magnify trends instead of countering them. The result is that an individual stock can move up or down ten per cent on a day with no real news.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Uncertainty also stimulates big moves because traders react to it in an unusual way. Work done by Daniel Ellsberg in the early sixties suggests that, faced with ambiguity, most people try to minimize possible losses. But there's considerable evidence that many traders, by contrast, deal with ambiguity by trying to maximize potential gains—thus the familiar dictum that volatility creates opportunities. In part, this is because it's the job of traders to trade. But it's also because market professionals appear to be chronically overconfident. A 2005 study of traders and investment bankers at two large banks, for instance, found that they significantly overestimated their knowledge of finance and the accuracy of their predictions. A 2002 survey of experienced foreign-exchange traders found, similarly, that they were far more sure of their market forecasts than performance justified. Overconfidence matters, because it can encourage excess trading. A study of individual investors by the economists Markus Glaser and Martin Weber, for instance, found that investors who thought more highly of their ability also traded more. What's worse, the effect seems to be magnified in times of uncertainty. The business-school professors Itzhak Ben-David and John Doukas, in a study based on twenty years of trading by institutional investors, found that when there's a profusion of "ambiguous information" about stocks investors trade more frequently, not less. And they do so even though, on average, they end up losing on their trades.

Oddly, then, the very things—uncertainty and lack of information—that might seem to make less trading and smaller bets advisable are pushing stock-market traders in the opposite direction. And this tendency is exacerbated by the fact that we are in a down market: the S. & P. 500 has fallen almost fourteen per cent this year. Mebane Faber, of Cambria Investment Management, recently did a study showing that, historically, volatility is significantly greater in down markets than in up ones. One likely reason is that traders, like gamblers, often find themselves "chasing losses"—if you've lost a lot, it's tempting to make big bets, in an attempt to get your money back.

So far, all this volatility has had little lasting effect on the value of the stock market. But in the long run volatility is a very bad thing, because it makes ordinary investors less inclined to trust markets. As a corrective to the recklessness of recent years, this might seem desirable, but too much risk aversion makes capital more expensive for everyone from businesses to homeowners, and the economy less dynamic. Once we get a clearer idea about the future, today's volatility should diminish. But for now we're stuck in a Yeatsian market: the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. Let's hope the center can hold.

—*James Surowiecki*

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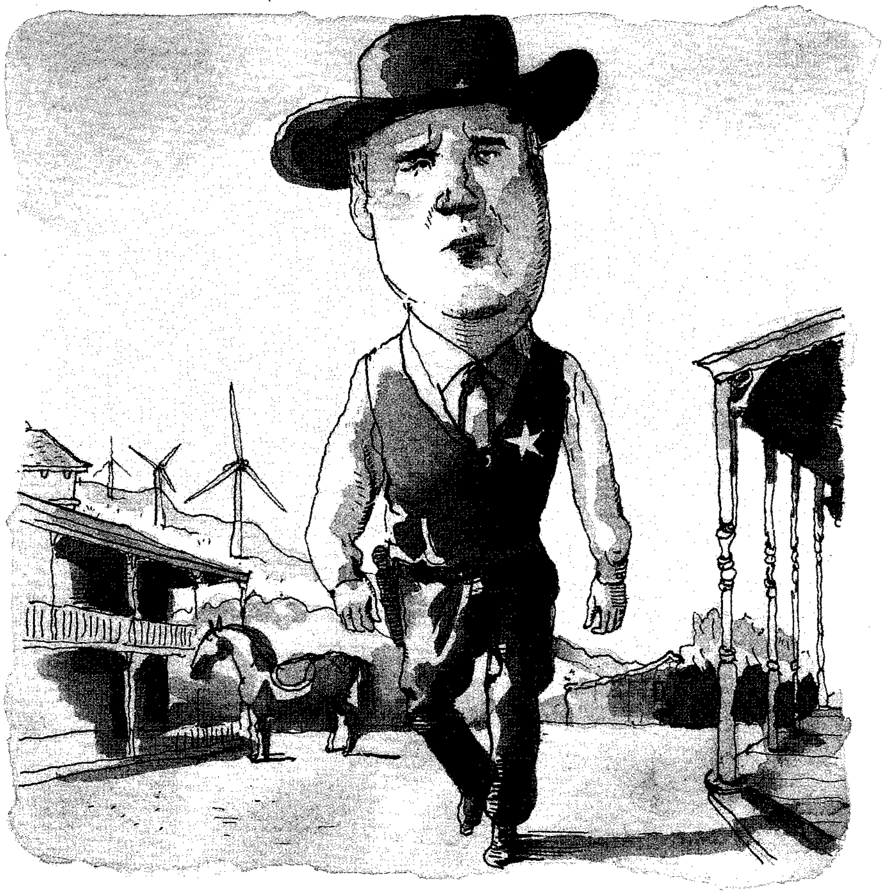
THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE CODE OF THE WEST

What Barack Obama can learn from Bill Ritter.

BY RYAN LIZZA



Governor Ritter's Colorado offers a glimpse of what may be the Democratic future.

BARRY BLITT

One day in early August, Bill Ritter, Jr., the governor of Colorado, met with Steve Feld, a professional filmmaker, to work on the video that will welcome delegates to the Democratic National Convention—and present Colorado to the rest of the country. Feld, whose television credits include "The New Lassie" and "America's Funniest People," steered the Governor toward a conference room on the seventeenth floor of a downtown building and clipped a microphone to his lapel. The backdrop for the shoot, visible through a window, was the city of Denver—bristling with construction cranes and skyscrapers for high-tech companies like Qwest Communications—and, in the distance, the Rockies.

Ritter was elected governor in 2006 by a persuasive seventeen-point margin—a victory that emphasized Colorado's political transformation. In just the past four years, Democrats have won control of the sixty-five-member Colorado House, where they now hold a fifteen-seat majority, and the thirty-five-member Senate, where they're up by five seats. In 2004, the Democrat Ken Salazar, a former state attorney general, won the United States Senate seat that was vacated by the Republican Ben Nighthorse Campbell, and Democrats now occupy four of Colorado's seven seats in the House of Representatives. This November, the Party is favored to win the state's other Senate seat (the incumbent Republican, Wayne Allard, is retiring), and Democrats are increasingly confident about picking up a fifth House seat. (George W. Bush won Colorado in both of his Presidential elections, but his margin fell from eight points in 2000 to less than five points in 2004.) There's a reason that the Party chose Denver as the host city for this year's Convention: they expect that it will only help the Democratic Presidential nominee to win the state this fall.

Ritter, who is soft-spoken and oddly reticent for a politician, told Feld that the film should help to tell the story of how Democrats have been winning in the West. "It shouldn't be just a Chamber of Commerce video," he said. "It should be political in its orientation and talk about what we in the Democratic Party have really achieved in the West. If you take a map and just look at where Democratic governors have succeeded Republicans, it's pretty dramatic."

It is in fact a startling change. Since 2002, Democrats have replaced Republican governors in Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. It is possible to drive from the Canadian border to the Mexican border and not pass through a single state governed by a Republican. "That's a good pictorial of how you can think about what Democrats have done out here," Ritter said.

Ritter, who is scheduled to address the Convention on Thursday night, is an improbable choice to be pointing Democrats toward the Party's future. He is a Catholic in a Protestant state. In his opposition to abortion, he is out of synch with Party members as well as with the Party platform; twice during his rise through Colorado politics, pro-choice Democrats tried to derail his career—in 1993, when he was appointed district attorney of Denver, and in 2005, as he was preparing to run for governor. "When I was making phone calls, raising money," he said, "I probably talked about abortion in ninety to ninety-five per cent of my calls." Many potential donors said that because of his view they couldn't support him.

Nor is Ritter a particularly magnetic politician. In a party that is now defined by the youth and energy at the top of the ticket, Ritter, who is fifty-one, is a sort of anti-Obama. A self-described "policy wonk," he reaches a pitch of excitement when he talks about the benefits of highly efficient photovoltaic cells or when he recalls what he learned from glaciologists on a recent trip to the Arctic. Rather than charisma, he exudes a beguiling genuineness. "He's in the Colorado mold," Gary Hart, the former Colorado senator and Presidential candidate, told me. "He's smart but he's not uppity. He's a down-to-earth, everyday guy, which is very important out here."

On a recent morning, I met Ritter outside the governor's mansion, an imposing building on a hill in downtown Denver; its entrance is bracketed by two-story Ionic columns, and the interior is filled with museum-quality furnishings from all over the world, the legacy of a Colorado pioneer family that built the house in 1908. Ritter emerged in a suit and open collar, looking slightly dishevelled, with his tie undone and slung around his neck. He carried a newspaper in one hand and, in the other, a briefcase so heavy it threw his stride slightly off balance. We drove to the closest Starbucks. "Can I get you anything?" he asked his travelling companions—his press secretary, a state trooper, an economic adviser, and me—as he stepped out of the car. He returned carrying two grande coffees and he finished knotting his rep tie—quickly and without recourse to a mirror—as we drove the thirty miles to the college town of Boulder, where Ritter was going to speak about the state to a conference of venture capitalists.

In his low-key, no-frills way, Ritter may be in the vanguard of what the national Democratic Party is becoming, both in its demographics and its policies. After about four years of lively discussion, strategists and Party leaders have decided that growth for Democrats is more likely to occur in the conservative but idiosyncratic West than in the solidly Republican South. Barack Obama's campaign, for example, is competing seriously in Colorado, Montana, Nevada, and New Mexico—places where Democratic Presidential candidates have had only limited success during the past three decades.

A significant reallocation of resources to the Western states is likely to have remarkable political consequences. As an election nears, voters in swing states like Colorado get much more attention from candidates, and a party's consulting class spends a disproportionate amount of time developing strategies tailored to the demands of these spoiled voters. Over time, the political process may change the very outlook of a party, forcing it to become more attuned to the peculiar issues and coalitions of new voters. (That's the effect that Iowa and New Hampshire have had on both parties.) As the Democrats take the first steps toward remaking themselves as a Western party, Ritter's Colorado offers a glimpse of what may be the Democratic future.

On a recent afternoon, Jim Carpenter, Ritter's chief of staff, a good-natured political junkie steeped in the arcana of Colorado demographics, stood in front of two giant state maps tacked to a wall in his office in the capitol building. Like the mansion, the capitol is impressive—a Corinthian-style structure capped by a gold-leafed dome. A brass disk on its steps marks a spot that is exactly a mile above sea level. One of Carpenter's maps showed cities and highways, and the other depicted the state's natural resources—a way to help Carpenter keep track of issues unique to Colorado, such as public lands, oil and gas reserves, invasive species of insects, and fire threats. "So much of Colorado's history and economy is wrapped up in our land," Carpenter said.

Carpenter has worked in Democratic politics for thirty years and has seen his party's fortunes come full circle. In the nineteen-seventies, the state's politics were partially defined by ardent environmentalists and the slow-growth movement—they were able to keep the 1976 Winter Olympics away from Denver—and by Democrats with national profiles, like Gary Hart (who was born in Kansas) and Patricia Schroeder (who was born in Oregon). By the nineties, the state was known as a cradle of both the religious right and the anti-tax movement. Colorado Springs, the most conservative area of the state, serves as home to James Dobson's Focus on the Family, as well as to Douglas Bruce, a California transplant who wrote and helped pass Colorado's Taxpayer's Bill of Rights, or TABOR, a set of laws restricting government spending.

Using the roadmap, Carpenter indicated a swath of cities and towns to the east of the Continental Divide, which bisects the state. Stretching for about a hundred and seventy-five miles along Interstate 25—from Fort Collins, in the north, through Denver, in the middle, to Pueblo,

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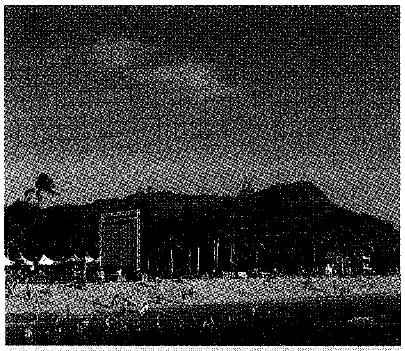

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in the south—this twenty-five-mile-wide area, known as the Front Range, is home to some eighty per cent of Coloradans, or about four million people. "Colorado really is one of the most urbanized states in the country, in terms of population concentration," Carpenter said. "Even with all this landmass."

The old method of winning Colorado, Carpenter explained, was similar to the approach that Democrats used in the East: a statewide candidate needed to dominate in a big city—Denver—as well as in the steel town of Pueblo, a rare sort of Western city whose politics were closer to those of a Rust Belt state than to those of the Rockies. "It's an old traditional blue-collar type of place," Carpenter said. "There were ethnic politics in Pueblo, blue-collar politics. It was like Milwaukee. There was the Hispanic part of town, and the Italian part of town, and the Eastern European part of town." Finally, Democrats also needed a big turnout in the heavily Hispanic San Luis Valley, in the south-central area of the state, as well as in Boulder, the epicenter for the environmentalists and a place where the politics were akin to those found in Berkeley, California, or Madison, Wisconsin. In some ways, it was a classic coalition for a Democratic victory: the urban core of a big city, the white working class, minorities, and student activists. Republicans, meanwhile, dominated the rural areas of the state and the fast-growing Denver suburbs.

"In the eighties and nineties, the demographics moved very far away from the Democratic Party," Carpenter continued. Since 1990, the Front Range has added almost 1.3 million residents—most of that growth in the Denver suburbs, where Democrats were routinely defeated by wide margins. During the nineties, Republicans found these new arrivals to be eager companions in the populist movements of the right, such as term limits and the Contract with America. The most influential political actor during this period—Douglas Bruce, now a state representative—managed to put TABOR on the Colorado ballot three times, starting in 1988, and kept it there until it finally passed, in 1992. The law mandates a popular vote on any tax increase, strictly limits over-all government growth, and requires that budget surpluses be returned to taxpayers via rebate checks. Bruce's ballot initiative served as a model for small-government conservatives nationwide, and it has played such a dominant part in Colorado political life that jurisdictions trying to overturn its restrictions call the process "de-Brucing."

Over dinner one night at the Elephant Bar, a chain restaurant in Colorado Springs that boasts of its "elephant-size portions," Bruce, a heavyset man of fifty-nine with fierce opinions (Obama is a "moron," a gay person is a "homo," illegal immigrants are "illiterate peasants"), complained that the conservative movement, even in Colorado Springs, was on the wane. "We have nine socialists on the city council and five RINOs"—Republicans in Name Only—"as county commissioners," he said between sips of a mango-raspberry swirl and outbursts directed at our waitress and the restaurant manager concerning the service. Bruce may have been unusually agitated that night; when we met, he was facing a primary challenge in ten days. "In the Republican Party, there's probably twenty-five to thirty per cent of the people who hate my guts," he said. "I have what are known as high negatives." Then again his opponent, Mark Waller, a former Air Force officer whose views were not so conservative as Bruce's, was a mere novice. "He's doing everything wrong," Bruce said. "So, frankly, it'll be a miracle if he won."

The Republican crackup in Colorado occurred early this decade, when a tenuous pact between economic and social conservatives came undone, and the Party's religious wing alienated moderates in the Denver suburbs by putting what was seen as an excessive emphasis on social issues. In 2004, in the midst of a state fiscal crisis—Colorado's budget deficit was a billion dollars, which threatened a cut in funding for higher education by a third—the Republican legislature spent an inordinate amount of time debating a resolution in support of a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage and revising a statute that required students and teachers in public schools to recite the Pledge of Allegiance every morning. The following November, the Democrats took over the legislature.

A year later, with the exploding population of the Front Range demanding more government services, Colorado Republicans faced their most serious crisis: they were divided over a ballot measure to suspend some TABOR rules for five years, allowing the government to use budget surpluses for health care, education, and transportation rather than refunding them to taxpayers.

Bill Owens, the Republican governor, surprised conservatives by coming out in favor of the referendum. Owens, after all, had been elected as an anti-government warrior. ("He sold us out," Bruce told me.) The measure passed in 2005, although not by much. The following year, Bill Ritter succeeded Owens, who had to step down because of term limits.

By 2006, the Democratic coalition was further altered by some striking new demographics. An area of opportunity had sprung up in what Carpenter calls "the blue strip"—the resort communities on the western side of the Rockies, including Steamboat Springs, Vail, Aspen, Crested Butte, and Breckenridge. "That's a change, because this used to be rural, traditional, Western, Republican ranch country, and now it's full of second homes and growing," Carpenter said. "It's a brand-new phenomenon." In effect, the ranks of blue-collar voters in places like Pueblo, where growth has come to a standstill, are being augmented by wealthy skiers. Furthermore, the Latino population in the state has doubled—to twenty per cent—since 1990. But, more important than the rise of the resort class and the growing number of Hispanics, Democrats became competitive in the Denver suburbs.

The Front Range is expected to have 6.3 million residents by 2040—a fifty-per-cent increase over today—and demographers have devised a new vocabulary to describe the distinctive characteristics of this and similar regions in the Southwest, such as Arizona's Sun Corridor, Nevada's Greater Las Vegas, and Northern New Mexico; the Brookings Institution, in a report called "Mountain Megas," has recently dubbed them "megapolitans." The fastest-growing suburbs in these areas, such as Westminster and Lakewood, outside Denver, are known as "boomburbs." What these megapolitans have in common are economies that are moving away from agriculture and the extraction industries (like mining, gas, and oil) and toward service industries (like tourism and hospitality) and high technology (like aerospace and biosciences). According to Brookings, the region will soon become the center of the postindustrial economy, meaning that "the southern Intermountain West is well on its way to earning itself the title of the New American Heartland." Change in Colorado is occurring even in Doug Bruce's home town of Colorado Springs. On August 12th, Bruce, the leader of the once ascendant anti-government movement, lost his primary to Mark Waller, the novice.

On the short drive to Boulder, Governor Ritter talked about his unlikely passage to the statehouse. He grew up outside Denver, in what is today Aurora—now one of those boomburbs—on a five-acre wheat farm where he and his eleven siblings helped his parents raise chickens, pigs, and cows. His father, a rancher, was an alcoholic who deserted the family when Bill, the sixth child, was thirteen, forcing the older Ritter kids to work to help support their mother, who was a bookkeeper, and the rest of the family.

Bill Ritter laid pipe and worked as a roofer. He was educated in both Catholic and public schools before attending Colorado State University as an undergraduate and then the University of Colorado as a law student. He worked his way up to chief deputy prosecutor in the Denver D.A.'s office and abruptly left the job for something completely different: a Catholic mission to Zambia, where for three years he and his wife ran a nutrition center and quietly taught villagers in the grip of an H.I.V. pandemic how to use condoms. When he returned home, he worked for two years as a federal prosecutor and then went back to the D.A.'s office. In 1993, after the elected D.A. retired, the Democratic governor, Roy Romer, appointed Ritter to the top post. Romer was won over by Ritter, at least in part, because of Ritter's unusual history, especially the chronicle of his experiences in Zambia. Ritter was elected district attorney of Denver three times and retired in 2004, because of term limits.

In the car, Ritter explained how, when he and David Beattie, his pollster, plotted his 2006 gubernatorial race, they divided the state's electorate into five groups. Ritter, who was sitting in the front passenger seat, took out a pen and paper and sketched a pie chart. He drew one wedge and marked it with the number twenty, which he said represented the "very liberal" base of the Democratic Party. "Then another sixteen per cent are what we call Fox News conservatives," he said, drawing a second wedge. "They're just really conservative and they're never gonna be with a Democrat because they're just hardened conservatives in terms of thinking the government has no role. They would privatize just about every public function except perhaps law enforcement."

No chance with those guys? I asked.

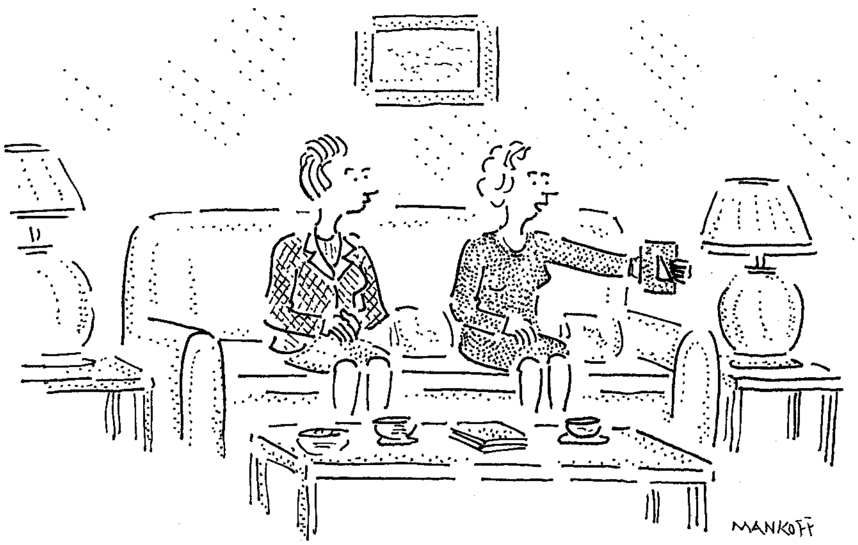
"No chance."

Ritter continued: "Then there's thirteen per cent of what we call moral conservatives, and there's some overlap between the morals and the Fox News conservatives, but they're hardened moral conservatives and they will not vote for a Democrat, even a pro-life Democrat, because he's a Democrat. I have a brother-in-law who's a moral conservative—didn't vote for me." The rest of the electorate, according to Ritter, was split between what he called "government pragmatists," which are thirty-seven per cent of voters, and "moral pragmatists," which are fourteen per cent. The first group, he said, "are pro-choice and they don't have issues around gay marriage. They just want to make sure government works, but they're *not* liberals, and they don't think the government should be increasing. It should spend your tax dollar prudently and wisely." Finally, the moral pragmatists, Ritter explained, "do have issues around gay marriage and they have issues having to do with abortion, but at the same time they don't want those issues to bog down government's ability to deliver appropriate functions."

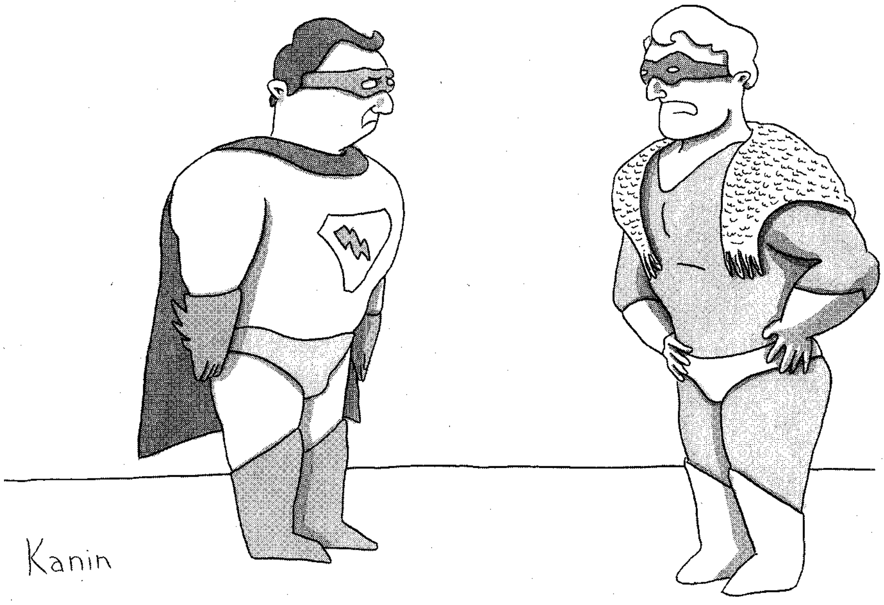
These voters were the key to Ritter's victory. "If you win among the liberals, and you win all the government pragmatists, then you're over fifty per cent," he said as we pulled off the highway and arrived at the sprawling and very modern campus of the University of Colorado at Boulder. "But you may not win all the government pragmatists for one reason or another. So you have to carve into those moral pragmatists, and I think the reason we won pretty significantly was because we carved heavily into that group."

Ritter's emphasis tends to be on the pragmatic. At the stop in Boulder, he told the venture capitalists how, during his gubernatorial campaign, his opponent ran ads portraying him as soft on crime. Ritter's aides told him that he needed to respond with commercials that showed his toughness. Ritter, though, recalled saying, "No, the first commercial we're gonna make will be in a wind farm."

In "Whistling Past Dixie," a book widely read and debated in Democratic circles when it was published in 2006, Thomas Schaller, a political scientist at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, argues that Democrats should give up on the South and focus on the West, partly because white Southerners, more than any other group, use social issues as a prism through which they view all other issues—and that attempts by Democrats to express some cultural affinity with these voters are rarely successful. Therefore, if the South remains the unattainable goal for Democrats—a political



"No, he didn't suffer. That's my only regret."



“What? A shawl is a kind of cape.”

white whale—striving to win the region will end up pulling the Party to the right on social issues like abortion and gay marriage, while achieving no electoral benefits. At the very least it will force Democrats to pander, leading voters to question the authenticity of candidates like John Kerry in 2004, who tried to pay homage to Southern culture. (No one quite believed that Kerry really enjoyed hunting and NASCAR.) Ritter’s analysis suggests that he agrees with Schaller. Democrats don’t need to speak in tongues to win the West. They simply need to give the electorate an honest signal that they take the concerns of moderate religious voters seriously. In office, Ritter’s top priorities have been education, climate change, and the effort to move his state closer to a post-fossil-fuel energy economy. He almost never talks about social issues, and there is by now a bipartisan consensus in Colorado that emphasis on such issues is not good for a party’s long-term health.

Other factors are at work out West for the Democrats. For one, the racial dynamics of Colorado and the region are not as fraught as they are elsewhere. “We never had slavery out here,” Gary Hart said. “I mean, it’s a Southern issue. And obviously the number of African-Americans is smaller, but that’s not the point. The point is we just didn’t have the heritage of slavery.” The Obama campaign has claimed that a huge increase in black turnout could make him competitive in the Deep South, especially Georgia. But this doesn’t seem a likely outcome to most analysts, who argue that the larger the black population in a Southern state the more the white population tends to vote Republican. David Beattie told me, “From a lot of work we’ve done in Georgia in state legislature seats, we learned that when the black percentage passes eighteen per cent, the whites in that seat tend to be more Republican than whites in seats where it is under eighteen per cent black.”

Another fact of Western politics—one that also helps Democrats—is an absence of a strong party tradition. “They didn’t have political machines two hundred years ago that dictated party, because they weren’t even states,” Beattie said. “They don’t have that history like Chicago or New York or anything along the East Coast.” There’s no culture of political patronage, so individual candidates and personalities matter far more than party labels. Colorado’s voter registration is divided roughly into equal thirds: Republicans, Democrats, and independents, with independents growing the fastest. That’s why Ritter governs ruthlessly from the center. He sees independence from the extremes as his guiding philosophy, and is therefore almost as quick to buck Democrats as he is to oppose Republicans. Among many Democrats, being associated with the centrist Democratic Leadership Council has become toxic, but not in the West. “In Colorado, it’s a badge of honor,” Ritter told me. One of his first acts as governor was to veto a piece of legislation that would have made it easier for unions to organize in the state. The veto so infuriated national labor leaders that James P. Hoffa, the president of the Teamsters, confronted Ritter at the annual Gridiron Dinner, in Washington, and warned him that labor issues could “blow up” the Democratic Convention. (Recently, Ritter has steered in a more pro-labor direction.)

Ritter is vigilant about correcting the impression, often stoked by the national press and liberal Democratic strategists, that Colorado is turning a deep blue. During his session with Feld, the filmmaker eagerly suggested that the theme of his video might be “from red to blue to green” and excitedly noted that it would show “how Colorado has transformed from a red state to a blue state, and now we’re going green!” The Governor visibly cringed at the idea and delicately steered the project in a different direction.

“I am a little concerned about that,” Ritter said, “because I think, while we have great emphasis on green, that it should be about different kinds of symbols than the color green—wind farms, solar, renewable-energy laboratories, those things that are symbolic of the new energy economy. People think that we overuse the concept of green, and it could become trite in its expression.” Later, Ritter returned to the point. “This idea about green in a lot of people’s minds still conjures up this notion of a fringe or something that’s out-there,” he told me. “It doesn’t inspire this notion of a new America. It just seems more substantive than a color.” He continued, “If you only make it about being green, you lose the sense that you can build a national economy around this.”

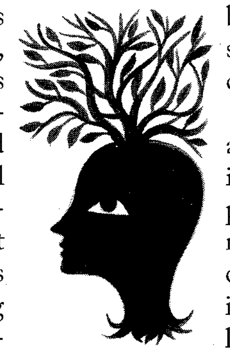
In the fall of 2006, Gary Hart sent Howard Dean, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, a memo outlining a new, Western-oriented political future. Under a grand-sounding title—“Manifesto: Democrats and the West”—Hart presented a ten-point plan for the transformation of the Democratic Party. When Dean announced, in January of 2007, that Denver would be the site of the 2008 Convention, he mentioned Hart’s document as having influenced his decision. Hart’s prescription is provocative. It calls for an outlook that is simultaneously more libertarian and more progressive. There is a renewed emphasis on private-property rights, accompanied by the suggestion that Democrats condemn the Supreme Court’s 2005 Kelo decision, which expanded the right of eminent domain by allowing governments to seize private property in the name of economic development. Taking land “for public use is one thing,” Hart wrote. “Taking homesteads, family farms and ranches, and small businesses for ‘public purposes,’ such as malls, shopping centers, and Wal-Marts, is quite another.” Much of Hart’s document dealt with how the Party should balance resource development and conservation. Like Ritter, Hart urged Democrats to promote the interior West as a center for the high-tech industry and a showcase for the transition to an economy built on renewable sources of energy.

Hart’s approach for deëmphasizing the culture wars is different from Ritter’s. Whereas Ritter appealed to the religious convictions of voters, Hart suggests a more laissez-faire approach. “Westerners are individualists who do not like the beliefs of others imposed on us,” he wrote. “We are people who believe in principles: integrity, honor, courage, accountability. The religious right preaches values. Democrats, regionally and nationally, should espouse *principles*, for ourselves and for our country.” He argues that while “values” have religious connotations, “principles” are secular.

I asked Hart how the Democratic Party would look if it faithfully followed his counsel. “If we brought the mountain states into the Democratic Party for the next twenty, thirty, forty years, it would make the Party younger. It would make the Party more environmentally concerned and attentive. It would certainly move energy-related issues to the forefront,” he said. “And you will find people here more technologically sophisticated. It would be much more new economy versus old economy. This is not an industrial area. This is small business and cutting-edge technologies. We’re about where California was twenty-five, thirty years ago.”

Hart would like the Democratic Party to become closer to the coalition that he rallied in his 1984 insurgent primary campaign against Walter Mondale. “Fritz Mondale and I split the country,” Hart said. “I swept the West, including California, and almost every Western state. The signature issue was globalization, even at that period, twenty-five years ago. Every state that was benefitting from international trade voted for me, and every state that was being hurt by international trade voted for Fritz. That was the issue.” It hardly needed pointing out that Obama and Hillary Clinton were divided by the same set of issues in their primary contests this year, with Obama rallying the Hart coalition and Clinton winning the Mondale voters. “I didn’t get the nomination and Obama did,” Hart said. “But the country has moved into the new economy much more than twenty-five years ago.”

There is an irony in the party of the downtrodden becoming the party of America’s economic winners, but in fact Democrats are doing better among voters in places that are prospering, like Colorado and New Mexico, and losing ground among voters in regions that are experiencing hard times, such as West Virginia or parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio. A Democratic turn toward the West would accelerate this trend. A party of the Western megapolitans and resort communities would be a party less and less like the party of F.D.R., Truman, and Lyndon Johnson. It would be more oriented to the haves than to the have-nots. It would rely more on educated voters. Its approach to social issues would be more matter-of-fact, and candidates would be less fearful of alienating the most reactionary evangelicals. It would be more oriented toward small businesses and thus more skeptical of workplace regulations. It might become a party that puts more emphasis on achieving energy independence and combatting global warming than on providing universal health care and social justice. “It’s a party that becomes more Hispanic, and less African-American,” Kenneth Baer, the co-founder of *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, said. “More oriented toward high-tech workers and less towards labor. It’s the end of the New Deal coalition.”



Schaller sees the American West as a place to refashion a Democratic future—one less tethered to the Party’s old interest groups. “Democrats have the chance in the Western states to forge parties that reflect a post-Great Society, new-economy identity,” he said. “That will be much harder to do on the Eastern Seaboard, where the parties are dominated by Catholics and union households. The Colorado Democratic Party is a much better opportunity to forge a new party than, say, the Democratic Party of New York, which is filled with patronage politicians and dominated by identity politics and the barons of the old New York metropolitan machine.”

Such changes are not going to take full effect this year, or next, in part because the Obama campaign is wealthy enough to compete in every region of the country. (Think of the Obama organization as a political venture-capital fund with enough money to test various theories of Democratic growth.) The campaign is certainly not about to pursue Western states at the expense of other regions of America. For example, along with Colorado, Virginia is one of Obama’s most important targets.

It may be more useful to think of “the West” not just as a place beyond the Great Plains but as shorthand for all those places where the demographics are moving in a direction similar to Colorado’s Front Range. In that sense, Obama’s hope to win Virginia is consistent with his party’s Western strategy. Democrats have recently done well there because northern Virginia has become increasingly moderate, suburban, and high-tech; the Party still falls short with rural and culturally conservative voters.

Democrats often pay homage to the symbols of the American frontier. But the iconography of their Western strategy is not so much about mountains, cowboys, and tumbleweed as it is about tract houses, research labs, and wind farms. Over the next decades, the Party will inevitably follow the lead of politicians like Bill Ritter and focus more attention on the West and all that it represents. As the population and electoral votes flow in that direction, so will the Democrats. ♦

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LETTER FROM BEIJING

FUN AND GAMES

Week Two at the Olympics.

BY ANTHONY LANE

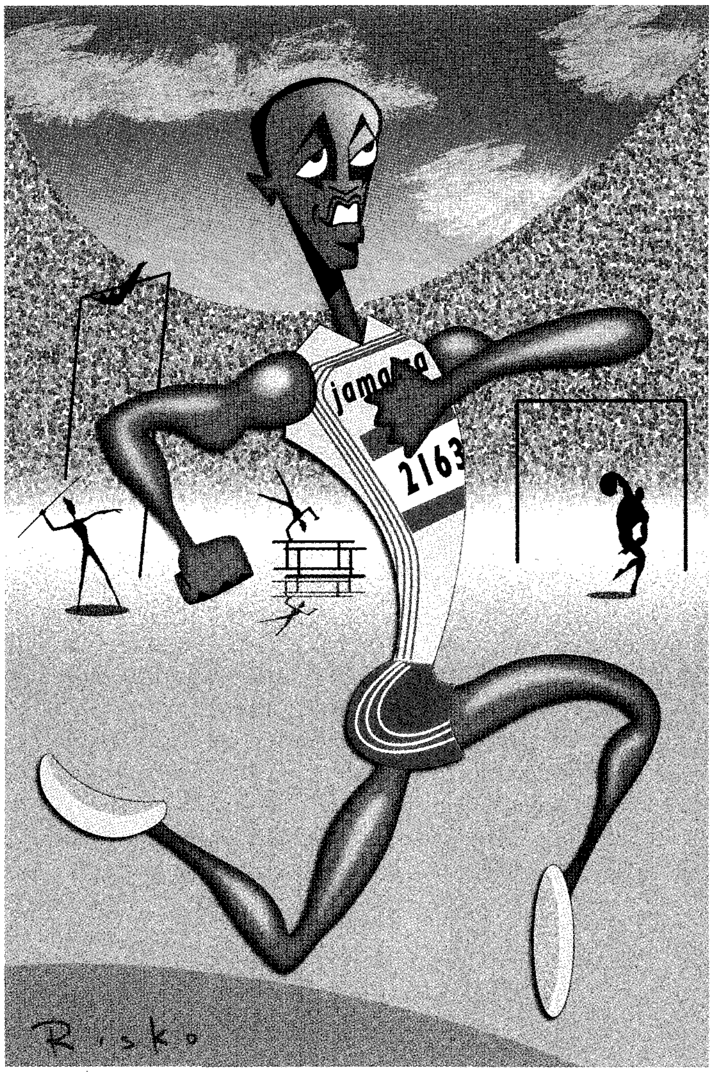
The morning of Friday, August 15th, was one of unaccustomed freshness in Beijing, and it brought forth two objects, both wreathed in legend but hitherto hard to spot. The first was a boiling ball of gases some ninety-three million miles away, known as the sun. The second was the sprinter Usain Bolt, whose homeland lies more than eight thousand miles away, in Jamaica, but who was now a hundred and thirty metres from where I sat. I was close to the finish line of the hundred-metre track, and he was at the start, awaiting his first heat of the Games, and going through his pre-race routine: glancing to the heavens and beating a brief tattoo, with his index fingers, on an invisible drum. He shimmied on the spot, revving his muscles, as all athletes like to do—the most febrile being Rafael Nadal, the young minotaur of the tennis circuit, who hops up and down, before every match, like a small boy in need of a pee. Bolt's nerves were less twitchy than that. Indeed, from this first heat up to the final, the following night, he seemed to be participating less in an Olympic sport than in a gargantuan party, which happened to have a sporting theme. My deepest fear was that he would break the world record and then test positive for rum and Coke.

In the end, come the final, he elected not to break the record so much as snap it like a bread stick. The clock stopped at 9.69, three-hundredths of a second faster than his previous record, set in New York earlier this year. To a sprinter, that is a gulf, and what was plain, to the bedazzled throng, was that he could widen it at will. Bolt is lofty for his sport, at six feet five (at first glance, you would tag him as a four-hundred-metre man), and he takes a while to get upright from the set position, but, once his stride is established, he is free to mold the rest of the contest into a monarchical stroll. In Beijing, reaction times—the getaway speed of a runner, measured from the crack of the pistol—flash up on the stadium screens, and they showed that Bolt the finalist had been sluggish off the blocks. What is more, after eighty-five metres he was already so far ahead of his peers, and so convinced of victory, that he swept his arms back like airplane wings, which must have slowed him down, and then, as a pièce de résistance, thumped his chest—a single clap of the right palm to the heart—before he crossed the line. So here's the deal: once Usain Bolt gets a decent start, and if he can be bothered to finish properly, with a dip of the neck and no showboating, he might turn out pretty quick.

All of this provoked an instant debate. Was he not under obligation, given the occasion, to travel as fast as he could—get serious out there, before a watching world, and wrestle the record down to something superhuman, around the 9.60 mark? The opposing view was that, heck, if you can't have a personal parade in the Olympics, when can you? Bolt set a new record anyway, and thus laid down another threshold that he will cross when he pleases, at some grim-faced meet in Qatar or Gothenburg. For the moment, he was like Russell Crowe in "Gladiator," killing off the competition and then heating the blood of the masses with a taunting, rhetorical cry: "Are you not entertained?" We were amused, for sure. The obvious reaction, to such a spectacle of dominance, was not to marvel but to laugh. After all, Bolt's domination was an innocent one, shod in golden sneakers and purged of ill will, and to witness it in a land where mastery is not always so benign, and where the government is unlikely to be entertained by any spirits who try to run free, felt like a blessing and a mischievous joke.

The long day closed, in other words, on a mirror image of its beginning. The first heroes to enter the stadium, that morning, had been the leaders of the twenty-kilometre walk, an event considered hilarious by everyone on planet Earth except the athletes themselves.

Somehow, wordlessly, a deal has been agreed on: we will not giggle, for politeness's sake, and they will continue to propel themselves, year in, year out, as if learning to moonwalk too soon after a hip replacement. Yet mockery was stilled, for a minute, by the haunted eyes of the winner, the Russian Valeriy Borchin, as he stood on the podium later, his gauntness telling of the mortification that had led him to this point; he clutched his medal and his bunch of flowers as if emerging from a cloistral seminary into the light.



On the track, Usain Bolt was like Russell Crowe in "Gladiator."

ROBERT RISKO

Again and again, the visitor to the games was taken aback (as friends who stayed home, with their TV remotes, could never be) by this clash of tones, the comedy of sport crunching up against the obsessiveness—not to mention the fitness—that drives its devotees. I could make out little of the men's shot put on Friday night, for instance, not because it was half a stadium away but because, even through binoculars, it appeared to be an international convention of bartenders, staged inside a cloud of talcum powder. This, or something similar, is what your shot-putter daubs onto his neck, from earlobe to shoulder, before hefting the ball and tucking it into position. Reese Hoffa, the United States Olympic trials champion, used more of the stuff than anyone since Diana Vreeland. The Americans had been billed, or overbilled, to run rampant. "I would love to be the class of Olympic athletes to sweep," Hoffa said. In the end, he fell short, his countryman Adam Nelson landed not a single shot in bounds, and it was left to the hedge-bearded Christian Cantwell, from Columbia, Missouri, to grab the silver. The gold went to the Pole Tomasz Majewski, and his magic bandanna, and for the first time I understood the binary appeal of the discipline: the brute thrust of Majewski's firing arm, uncrooked and locked, versus the delicate skip of his swivelling feet below. If the U.S. wants to do better in London, four years from now, it had better start sending some bison to ballet school.

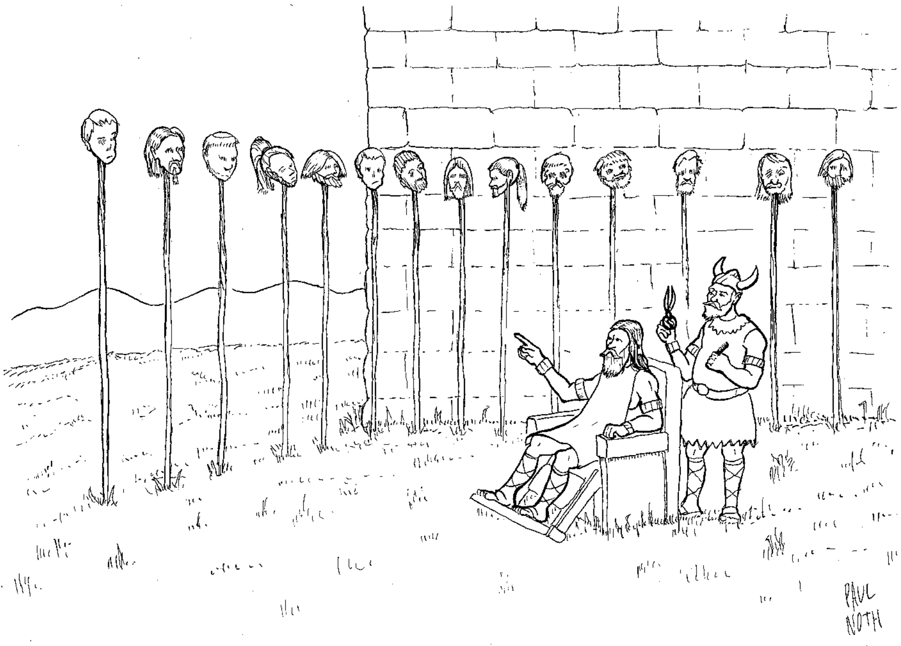
The best thing about the shot put was the cars. After the shot landed, and the distance had been measured, the precious sphere would be retrieved by an official and placed in the cockpit of an automobile: two feet long, bright red, with a tail fin—in short, the idealized vehicle that I drew during chemistry lessons when I was nine years old. Now it exists, for real, and there are two Chinese fellows with the best job in the world, who get to steer it back to the shot-putting circle by remote control. (It can also bring a hammer, or even a javelin, which slots neatly into the fin.) I followed the gaze of the spectators around me, and realized that most of them had entirely lost interest in what was happening on the track, so urgently were they tracing the progress of the cars, and so hastily were they revising their list of what they want for Christmas. One question, though, will linger after the Games are done. The red supercars are equipped with windshields, but why? Who needs to see out? Are there tiny drivers tucked in there, bred specially for the event?

There are some sports, sadly, that are doomed to stay irredeemable—in which the skills required, however towering, cannot hope to emerge from the smog of absurdity. Synchronized swimming, it is universally agreed, presents too inviting a target. Long before this year's competition began, on August 10th, I was lost in the arcana of the American press handout, which explained that the stuff the swimmers rub into their hair, to keep it helmet-hard and out of their smiles as they cavort, is unflavored Knox gelatin, "also used in Jell-O and cheesecake." The main ingredient of Knox is "soft horse cartilage." Add the Knox to the nose clips that the women affix, for those tricky submarine somersaults, and you get an unsavory blend of sport, cooking class, and circus.

No less ambivalent is the status of handball, in which teams—there is no getting around this—try to throw a ball into a net. If the net were in a hoop, above their heads, the game would demand a frictionless flexibility and pace, and the results would bring in hundreds of millions of dollars. Turn the net into a goal, however, tack it to the floor, and for some reason the appeal tends to wilt. In contrast to modern pentathlon, whose five segments—shooting, fencing, swimming, riding, and running—were proposed by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founding genius of today's Olympic Games, and based upon the experience of a cavalry soldier caught behind enemy lines, handball is based upon the experience of a management trainee with a ball of paper and a trash basket on the other side of the cubicle. I watched Spain against China, a tense affair, and scarcely noticed the score, so entranced was I that the Spanish goalkeeper had come to the game in his pajamas—soft, stretchy yellow ones with red piping, and a crisscross of matching yellow ribbon on his sure-grip slippers. He was the Malvolio of handball, his name was José Javier Hombrados, and he steered his team to a snug 36–22 victory—insured, I like to think, by the actions of his colleague Iker Romero, who crossed himself twice as he ran onto the court. How much divine protection, exactly, does one need for a game of handball?

Local support, needless to say, was pitched somewhere between the dutifully zealous and the ecstatic. There was one Chinese player, a close-cropped imp named Zhu Wenxin, whose pleasure was to whirl his arm before hurling a penalty throw, and his supporters reacted with the fervor of medieval flagellants. The English-speaking announcer fanned the mania, labelling him "Three-Sixty Master," and what pen could describe the thrill of seeing Three-Sixty Master facing off against Pajama Boy? I sat either amid or alongside Chinese crowds at field hockey, weight lifting, fencing, tennis, table tennis, and water polo, and, for every skeptical moment at which their eagerness felt like a fix, or a pressurized public service, there were half a dozen when the howling seemed no less honest, thunderous, and partial than it would at an N.F.L. game, or at a soccer match in the British Premier League. There were reams of supporters at the hockey game, against South Korea, who had clearly been bused in to fill the seats, their yellow T-shirts bearing the words "Cheering from Beijing Workers." Yet the buzz of the match was unfakably contagious, and, when China opened the scoring, after five minutes, even bewildered novices caught the mood, dizzy at the thought of vanquishing South Korea. I turned to the woman next to me, who had introduced herself as a Chinese-Korean interpreter. What was the current state of political relations between the two countries? "Very nice," she said, and that was that.

Some of the sporting nuances were almost too fine to unpick. According to my neighbor, the Chinese cheerleaders at halftime had been coached in the niceties of the rah-rah by a South Korean. Where else but at the Olympics—whose motto reads "One World One Dream"—would you get this kind of deal? Likewise, the roars for Japan against Germany in team table tennis sounded a little excessive to me, until it was explained that one of the Japanese players, Kan Yo, was Chinese-born. Most disconcerting of all was the noise I heard behind me at eight o'clock on the night of August 14th: a sob of grief, the one thing that is never lost in translation. I turned around and found a volunteer—one of the hundred thousand young Chinese who gave their services to the Games, and who were its best and most likable asset. Their good cheer rarely dimmed, and this was the first volunteer I had seen in tears. I put an arm around her shoulders, risking a diplomatic incident, and asked what the matter was. "I am so sad," she said, bravely maintaining the required standard of English. I asked if I could help in any way. "I want them to win this game in our country." So that was it. "It is just a game, but so sad," she added. Now I understood, and I knew there was nothing I could do. And it wasn't just a game. It was fencing.



As Olympic endeavors go, fencing is kind of perfect. It has the sting of the new—the minor sport with a major place in history, a satisfyingly dense array of rules and dexterities, and yet, for all that, an aim that seems piercingly simple. This is a far cry from tennis, say, whose blueprint is in our brains, and which feels muffled and stranded at the Olympics. I saw Nadal play a set, and a listless Roger Federer do the same (two days later, he lost), and then drifted away. Tennis carries with it such a halo of big money, and the players are so starkly defined by their individual gifts, that it's hard to rethink it, for eight days, as an Olympic team game, ablaze with amateur good will. Hero worship, for all but a handful of Olympians, is the fleeting exception, whereas for tennis stars it's the rule. Nadal, to his credit, looked delighted when he won the gold medal, but, as he tossed his wristbands to his fans, you could see, in their outstretched hands, a craving that no Olympics could ever sate: bring me the sweat of Rafael Nadal.

Things were different on August 9th, when I dropped idly into the Fencing Hall at seven in the evening, steeped in total ignorance, to take a look. At two o'clock in the morning, still shaken by what I had seen, I was downing gins and vodkas with the coaches of the U.S. team and drinking in their wisdom. Luck had been on my side: that night, American female fencers had done what the shot-putting guys could only talk of, and won a clean sweep. Gold in the individual women's sabre had gone to Mariel Zagunis, of Portland, Oregon; silver to Sada Jacobson, of Dunwoody, Georgia; and bronze to Rebecca Ward, also of Portland. Zagunis had repeated her triumph of four years ago, in Athens, and Jacobson had risen one place. Ward was the

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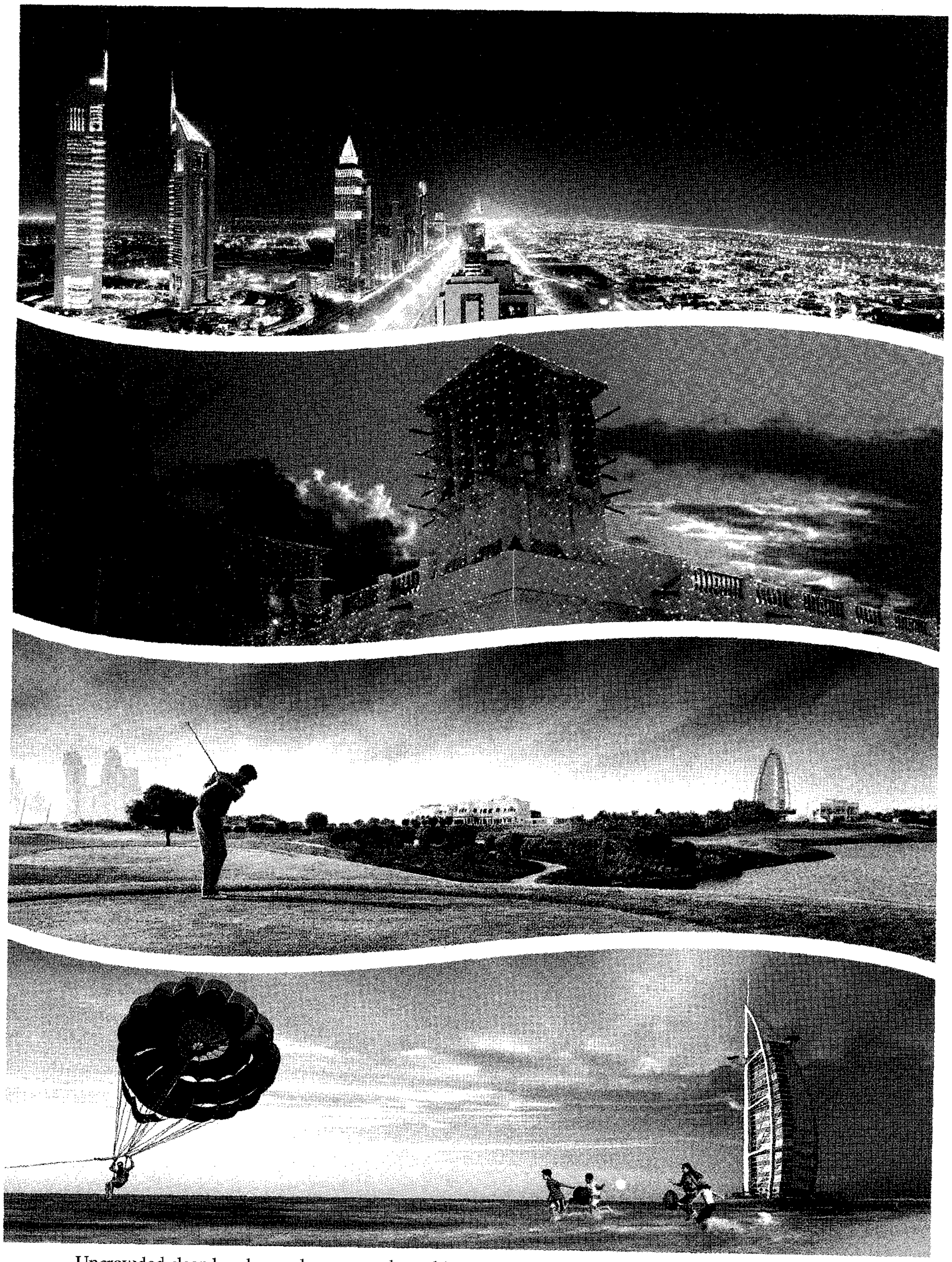

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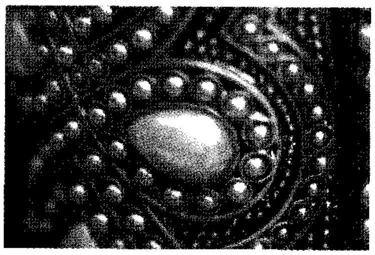

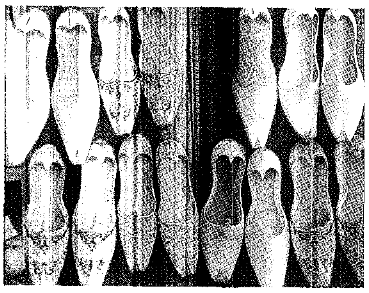

Treasures of the Trade

If early twentieth-century pearl divers who established Dubai as a trading center could emerge from the Persian Gulf after a hundred-year swim, they would not believe the range of treasures being traded here today.

Traditional marketplaces, or souks, still do a brisk business along Dubai Creek, but now shoppers come from the world over to wander the **Gold Souk**, whose glittering stalls drip with shiny displays of gold jewelry designs. The key to any transaction here is haggling—a time-honored tradition—including the tactic of walking away from a vendor to elicit a better deal.

Nearby, in the Deira district, the aromatic **Spice Souk's** small alleys are lined with bags of nutmeg, saffron, cardamom, and dried fruits. Frankincense, burned as incense during special occasions, is a popular purchase. Within walking distance, the **Perfume Souk** caters to the Arabian preference for spicy fragrances, but also sells custom-blended varieties.

Modern versions of these ancient marketplaces are a recent addition to Dubai's shopping scene. The **Souk Madinat Jumeirah** is a bazaar with a mix of boutiques, cafés, and restaurants along winding paved walkways. Local water taxis, or *abras*, transport shoppers via man-made canals.

Another update on the traditional marketplace is the **Khan Murjan**, a new two-level subterranean souk in Dubai's Wafi mall. Marble floors, a stained-glass ceiling, and colorful mosaic walls create a beautifully authentic setting for merchants selling handmade crafts, art, and furniture. Shoppers ready for a break can dine at the souk's Khan Murjan restaurant, serving pan-Arabic cuisine such as Moroccan lamb *tagine*.

Besides its souks, Dubai is famous for its expansive malls, including one of the world's largest, the **Dubai Mall.** Scheduled to open this week, it's the size of fifty football fields, with 1,200 stores, an aquarium, an ice rink, and its own gold souk.

Dubai's malls have become destinations for entertainment as well as shopping, with stores typically open until 10 P.M. The **Mall of the Emirates** features an indoor ski slope, the **BurJuman Centre** is known for its impressive collection of luxury retailers, and **Ibn Battuta** is named after an Islamic explorer. This mall has six courts representing countries where Battuta traveled as well as an exhibit that includes a water-powered clock sitting atop a pachyderm.

For true shopping aficionados, the annual **Dubai Shopping Festival** will take place from January 15th. During this beloved month-long celebration, retailers offer tempting bargains and giveaways along with music, art exhibitions, and performances—an event sealing Dubai's reputation as a formidable center of trade.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JEWELRY CLOSE-UP, SOUK MADINAT JUMEIRAH ©IAN LLOYD; TEXTILES AND SHOES ©COURTESY OF DUBAI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM; BURJUMAN CENTRE ©PEJMAN PARVANDI

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baby of the squad, only eighteen, and heading to Duke University in the fall, although by the time she left the hall that Saturday night, she no longer looked like a kid. She looked like a grownup.

The turning point can be pinned down precisely. It came after Ward lost her semifinal to Zagunis. Like many Olympic events, fencing is such a small world that you regularly, and unavoidably, compete against friends—in this case, friends beside whom you will later fight in the team event. This lends a taut and unbreathable air to the contest. If the scoring is close, then so is the atmosphere, near-stormy with complicated feelings. David Jacobson, the father of Sada, and an endocrinologist by profession, told me of the "huge emotional swings" that the sport entails—"You have to temper the highs as well as the lows," he said. I went down to the mixed zone, the jungly gauntlet of reporters that athletes in every sport must run immediately after their events, and saw the defeated Ward pass through. To put a question would have been inhuman, and she wouldn't have heard, anyway, so immured was she in her fortress of desolation. The natural high color of her face was deepened with perspiration and laved in tears; she looked like a woman ready to call a cab to the airport. Instead of which, she composed herself, walked out twenty minutes later for the bronze-medal playoff against the Russian Sofiya Velikaya, went 1–6 down, composed herself again, overhauled her opponent, and won the match, 15–14. How she did this I have no idea.

The profile of U.S. fencing is hard to gauge—that night won't have harmed it, and all three medallists were on the "Today" show the next morning—but, full face, it has got a whole lot better. The fencers now use a transparent visor where there was once a mesh mask, and their intensity is clear to see. Indeed, there were times, during the American bouts, with the auditorium in darkness and the only light falling on the strip (the slender runway up and down which the fencers charge and retreat), when I felt more like a theatregoer, rapt and aghast, than like an ordinary sports fan. The sabre has the edge, literally, on the épée and the foil; hits from those are administered with the point, whereas the sabre-rattler can score with a slice of her cutting edge or the flat back of the blade. As a viewer, you get a lot more slash-and-clash for your money, which has to be a good thing, and if, mid-bout, you had presented Sada Jacobson with a staircase, a chandelier, and a black-clad Basil Rathbone she could probably have coped with them, too.

David Jacobson was a fencer at Yale, and made the national squad in 1974. His wife, Tina, still fences, and said proudly of Sada, "She's doing it for America, and I'm doing it so I don't get osteoporosis." All three of her daughters—she also has Emily, twenty-three, and Jackie, nineteen—have been world champions at some stage. Then it's in the genes, right? David Jacobson shook his head, and pointed: "Arkady," he said. Arkady Burdan, the coach of the Jacobson clan and one of five coaches of the U.S. Olympic team, is a squat, unstoppable bullet of a man, heavy-shouldered and smooth-skulled, like two Alan Arkins mashed together. He is sixty-four years old, born in Uzbekistan, but brought up in Odessa, on the Black Sea. He came to America in 1990, and he will tell you what fencing is. "Is physical chess," he told me, using his cigar like a short, fat épée to ram home the point. "Without coach, is *nothing*." I saw him at strip-side, that Saturday, and again the following Thursday, when the same three Americans fenced as a team and took bronze. As each assumed her position, en garde, he sat gazing down, as though brooding in prayer, all but unable to watch. Halfway through one of Sada Jacobson's individual bouts, when she was slipping against Velikaya, she took time out—there is a compulsory pause when one of the contestants reaches eight points—and came across to Burdan for advice. A few words, a hand on her arm, and back she went, transfigured and cooled, and wrapped the match up, 15–11. With coach, is everything. Later, over drinks, I asked Burdan what secrets he had confided in the gloom. "She look so tight," he told me. "She look she do some *hard, terrible* job." Did he discuss strategy, a way to strike back into the game? "I not call her technicals, no. I tell her, create fencing—her fencing. I say, have *fun. Play.*"

The way of Burdan is not, of course, the only way. There is also the Marcia Lyon way. I spoke with her son, Jay Lyon, of Canada, after he had held his nerve and taken two matches, one on the heels of the other, on the Archery Field. His first victim had been Xue Hai Feng, of China, who was ranked No. 18 at the games, twenty-nine places above Lyon, so it was quite a scalp, and he had then seen off Brady Ellison, of the United States. What was boosting him that day? "Sweet little e-mail from my mom. She said, no matter what, the sun's still going to come up tomorrow." Mrs. Lyon was clearly not in Beijing, where the chances of that were around fifty-fifty. "And, if I don't do well, she's going to kick my ass," he added, lovingly. The other mystery weapon in Lyon's quiver was Phil Towle, a performance coach back in the States, whose online messages had been an inspiration. "He's also been a psychologist for Metallica," Ryan said, as if to justify the gentleman. I had to steady myself against a passing volunteer. Metallica has a psychologist? What, exactly, is it repressing in its sylvan melodies?

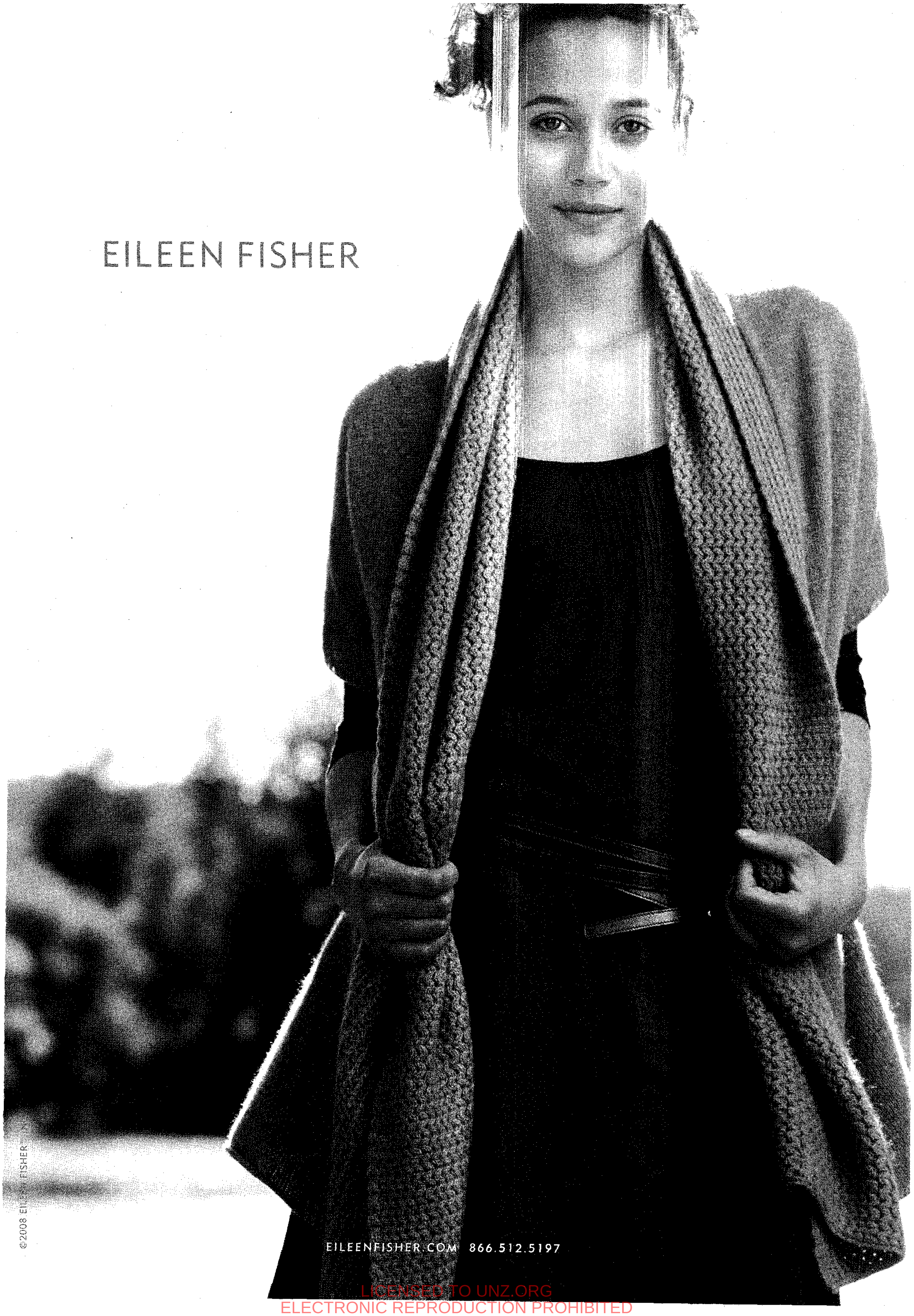
The urge to play at the Olympic Games is not restricted to the athletes. As an onlooker, too, you want the kickass performance, but you also want some fun, and that was the problem for Beijing. Nobody could knock the transport system, with its humming fleet of electric buses, or the facilities at every venue; and yet, despite this formidable organization—or perhaps as its inevitable result—the enterprise, as a whole, was beset by a looming lack of joy. This was not really the fault of the Chinese; it may simply indicate a design flaw inherent in the Olympics themselves, which have grown so vast and unwieldy that the only way to run them successfully may be as a kind of mini-China, packaged and policed to a fault. Sports addicts and journalists alike were faced with a paradox: the more you got to see, the less of a blast it was. At noon every day, as I stumbled across the asphalt from one shuttle bus to another, my lunch, in the form of a Snickers bar, already softening in my pocket, the sensation of being a lost soul was overwhelming. Around me stretched the gray acres of the Olympic Green, its title being the closest thing that the Chinese authorities have come to irony, and within me was a memory of Fabrizio del Dongo. Readers of Stendhal's "The Charterhouse of Parma" will know Fabrizio as the hapless hero, whose experience of Napoleonic combat does not come off quite as splendidly as planned. “Was what he had seen a battle,” Stendhal writes, “and secondly, was that battle Waterloo?”

In the same way, I am confident that I attended the Games of the XXIX Olympiad, in 2008; but I cannot truly say whether I went to China, and, if so, whether the city I lived in for a fortnight was Beijing. My hotel, miles away on an outer ring road, was like a silent, fortified compound for the criminally insane; it had no bar, though it did, in a slightly unwise nod to the Games, have an indoor archery range. I had a go, late one night, and almost shot myself in the foot; where were you, Phil Towle, just when I needed you most? I never made it out of town, to the soccer in Shanghai, the sailing in Qingdao, or the equestrian events in Hong Kong. (That seems a long trip, but the riders for the Melbourne Games, in 1956, didn’t compete in Melbourne at all. They competed in Stockholm. And, anyway, if you were a horse this year, would you really want to fly to Beijing, knowing that at any moment a synchronized swimmer might steal your soft cartilage and use it as hair gel?) The fact is that the Olympic Games could happen anywhere. They seem to unfold in a vast and spotless nowhere. I could have been in Melbourne, or Toronto, where at least the food would have been better—where the *Chinese* food would have been better. The organizers, inexplicably, built no respectable restaurants or enticing stores within the zone; the concession stands were best avoided, being barely any different from what you get at Loews before a movie. So bananas and water it had to be, as one sat for five hours in the National Stadium, on a windless night, and watched the women heptathletes. Still, by the look of them, they hadn’t eaten anything since a small Greek salad at the Athens Games, in 2004, so I guess we were all in the same boat.

The Chinese took these women to their hearts. Few events are more consuming than the heptathlon, which lasts two whole days. The athletes collapsed on the track at the end, after the eight hundred metres, with the Greek holding an ice pack to the neck of her French rival. Gathering their strength, they rose and linked hands to form a sisterly chorus line, taking a bow down the back straight, and the crowd went crazy. This prompted the thought, Was there something different in the massed exclamations of the second week? The locals had crowed over the opening ceremony, as it brandished the image of a potent China abroad, and that throb of entitlement had endured through the rest of the opening week, with its plethora of indoor events—badminton, gymnastics, diving, and other strongholds of the Chinese. An acquaintance who has lived in Beijing for five years says that, in his opinion, they have no notion of the underdog (why cheer anyone but a winner?), and the first week of the games had proved his point. Now we were outside, in the open air, and the People’s Republic was having to learn to lose. The overdog of the hundred-and-ten-metre hurdles, Liu Xiang, limped off before he had even begun, a disaster only slightly less traumatic for his country—not to mention for Visa, Coca-Cola, and Nike—than the loss of India was for the British Empire. More measured was the response to Hu Kai, a funky and bespectacled hundred-metre sprinter, who came in last in his second heat, yet earned a surge of sympathetic acclaim. Heaven knows, it takes more than a fortnight to melt a national mood, but it could just be that the most telling figure at the games, for the Chinese, was not their champion weight lifter Cao Lei, who started where the other lifters left off, but someone like their steeplechaser Zhao Yanni—outpaced, shattered, but unbowed as she flopped across the finish. If she is ostracized, of course, and banished to a Snickers factory for the next twenty years, we’ll know that nothing has changed.

“The Olympic victor, I said, is deemed happy in receiving a part only of the blessedness which is secured to our citizens, who have won a more glorious victory and have a more complete maintenance at the public cost. For the victory which they have won is the salvation of the whole State.” Thus Socrates says to Glaucon, in the fifth book of the Republic. Plato, one of the great wrestling philosophers, could be describing the official Chinese attitude to these Games, wherein the individual is swallowed up by the team performance of a nation. On the other hand, the one aspect of victory that Plato could not have foreseen is the television camera, which, in its sentimental aggression, has made the masses anything but faceless. Does our behavior change when we find ourselves being watched? I looked at the badminton winner, Zhang Ning, when she stood to receive her medal; as the tears fell, the camera crept in close. That focus, like the double air-punch—or, indeed, like the screams of the fabulous fencer Ni Hong, who celebrated almost every hit with an uninhibited yowl, crouching down and going, “Yeaah! Yeaah! Yeaah!”—is a pure invention of the wicked West, plundered by China for its own state-sponsored highs. Ni, at such moments, seemed less Chinese than any Chinese person I have ever seen; she looked, if anything, like a Beatles groupie in the final number of “A Hard Day’s Night.”

China has taken the gamble of seeking to make people rich before it has made them free. By the standards of the Enlightenment, that is either an illusion or a cruel con, though a free marketeer might argue that the liberties bestowed by trade and consumption—the strange half-freedom of the television commercial, for example, which enslaves us even as it promises the wealth of the world—are not to be sniffed at, and may, indeed, be what most of us ponder and pursue. (We shouldn’t worry more about the price of gas than about human rights in China, but we do.) As I dined, one day, on a Big Mac in a thunderstorm, seeking and failing to find refuge in a packed McDonald’s beside the Olympic Green subway station, I heard the Olympic theme song, playing on a tape loop inside, and watched a Chinese teen-ager in the doorway. She sucked on her milkshake and then sang along, swaying; she was, at once, everything that the capitalist corporation could hope for, and everything that the Communist Party had planned. I tried to talk to her, but she spoke no English; besides, what young person wants to be asked if he or she feels free? What kind of question is that? I thought of the sign I had seen on the first full day of the Games, in the Forbidden City, as I headed back from the cycling. “Hall of Earthly Tranquillity,” it read, and then, at the bottom, in smaller letters, “Made Possible by the American Express Company.” One world. One dream. ♦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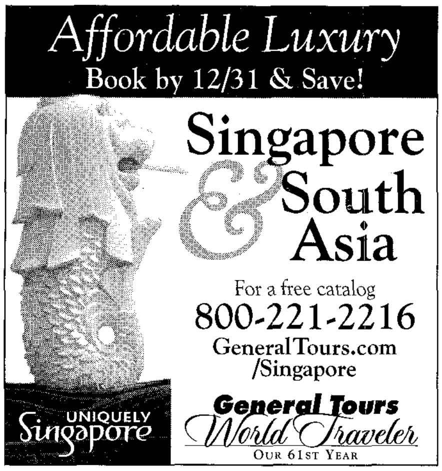
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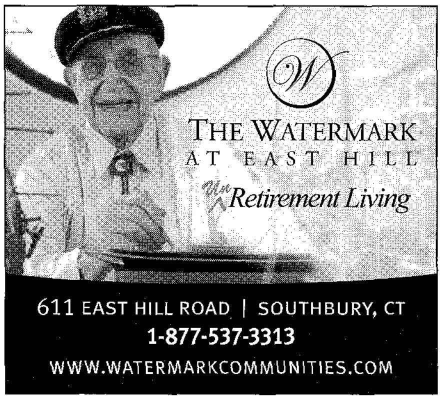
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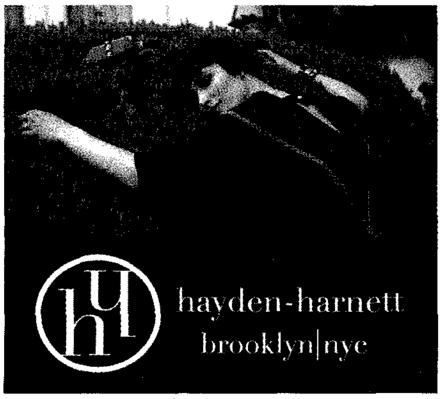
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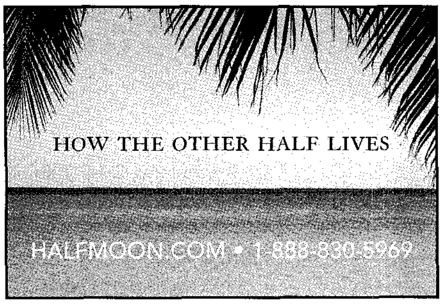
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ANNALS OF RETAIL

STOP, THIEF!

The high-tech approach to catching shoplifters.

BY JOHN COLAPINTO

On a recent morning, a dapper man in his fifties with a narrow mustache, dressed in a black Armani suit, strolled past the cosmetics counters on the main floor of a midtown Manhattan department store. He was the store's vice-president of corporate asset protection, second in command in the store's loss-prevention department. Loss prevention is devoted to reducing what retailers call "shrink": the erosion of profits—some forty billion dollars in 2006, according to the University of Florida's National Retail Security Survey—resulting from shoplifting, employee theft, and organized retail crime (professional thieves who steal goods in large volume for resale). Some form of loss prevention exists at every level of retail, from dollar stores and big-box discounters like Wal-Mart and Target to high-end establishments like Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys, and Saks Fifth Avenue. But it is a side of retail that many merchants are reluctant to publicize; hence this store's insistence that neither it nor its personnel be named.

The vice-president grew up in East Harlem and the Bronx, and has worked in loss prevention for thirty years. "I started as a store detective on Long Island," he said. "I had a knack for picking out bad guys. I grew up with them and I knew how they behaved." As he walked past the boutiques on the store's main floor, he saw the place very differently from the way shoppers would. A selection of Dolce & Gabbana handbags on display steps from a street door was an open invitation for a shoplifter (or "booster," in industry parlance) to scoop up a few thousand-dollar purses and run out. The seventy-dollar bottles of Christian Dior perfume on open shelves near the entrance posed a similar risk. "The opportunity is there," the vice-president admitted. "But it's a risk that management is willing to take to create an atmosphere that's relaxed and inviting."

He left the store's polished wood cabinets, marble floors, and Roman columns for a dingy stairway tiled in linoleum. At the bottom, he pushed through a door into the asset-protection complex, a warren of windowless basement offices. He went through a door marked "Camera Room"—a low-ceilinged chamber lit by the glow from twenty television screens stacked floor to ceiling along one wall. The screens showed high-angled views of customers moving through more than two hundred thousand square feet of sales floors, wholly unaware (most of them) that the grapefruit-size mirrored domes attached to the tops of pillars and to the ceilings concealed high-resolution color cameras recording their every move. The several hundred cameras dispersed about the store can be rotated three hundred and sixty degrees with remote-control joysticks; that day, they were being operated by three loss-prevention camera agents who sat, in suits and ties, at small consoles in front of the screens.

Loss-prevention professionals say that they avoid any kind of profiling to single out suspects, since thieves can be male or female and come in all colors, ages, and socioeconomic levels. (Winona Ryder, the movie actress, is one of the standing examples of this tenet: in 2001, she was apprehended at Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills and later convicted of stealing more than five thousand dollars' worth of designer items, including an Yves Saint Laurent blouse, Donna Karan socks, Frédéric Fekkai hair accessories, a Gucci dress, and a Dolce & Gabbana handbag. In 2006, Claude Allen, then the top domestic-policy adviser to George Bush, pleaded guilty to stealing hundreds of dollars by making fraudulent returns at Target.) Instead, agents are trained to recognize the behaviors that betray a person's intention to steal: selecting merchandise without regard for size or price, feeling carefully along clothing seams for sensor tags, or scanning the ceilings and walls for security cameras. Men shopping alone and carrying any kind of bag always draw a second look from agents, according to the vice-president, because it is assumed that most men will go shopping only when dragged by a wife or girlfriend. One of the store's camera agents showed me a surveillance tape from three weeks earlier, when he had zeroed in on a well-dressed white man with graying hair who was carrying an expensive briefcase. The man was trying on three-hundred-dollar designer sunglasses from a swivel rack. Nothing about his relaxed demeanor suggested that he was a thief. But each time the man took off a pair of glasses, he folded them and placed them on the counter before selecting another pair.

"You don't do that when you're trying on glasses," the camera agent pointed out. "You don't fold down the arms."

It was enough to convince the agent that a camera should be kept on the man, who eventually slid a pair of glasses into an inside pocket of his jacket. He unhurriedly pocketed three more pairs, then took a circuitous route out of the store—riding an elevator up two floors and immediately descending on the escalators—trying to shake any floor detectives who might be following him. But the camera detectives never lost sight of him. At the street door, several loss-prevention agents converged on the man. (They never intervene until a thief has made clear his intention to leave without paying.) He was taken to an interview room for questioning. A search of his belongings revealed that his briefcase contained a "booster bag"—an ordinary shopping bag lined, inside and out, with tinfoil affixed with duct tape, a tactic used by boosters to defeat the electronic alarm systems at store exits. Agents also found a knife and wire cutters, a Ralph Lauren suit that had not been paid for, and a list of other items to steal. Clipped to the man's belt was a Taser gun disguised to look like a cell phone. The man was held in one of the complex's barred lockup cells pending the arrival of police. The vice-president told me that he turned out to be a booster from an organized retail-crime ring run by Russian mobsters.

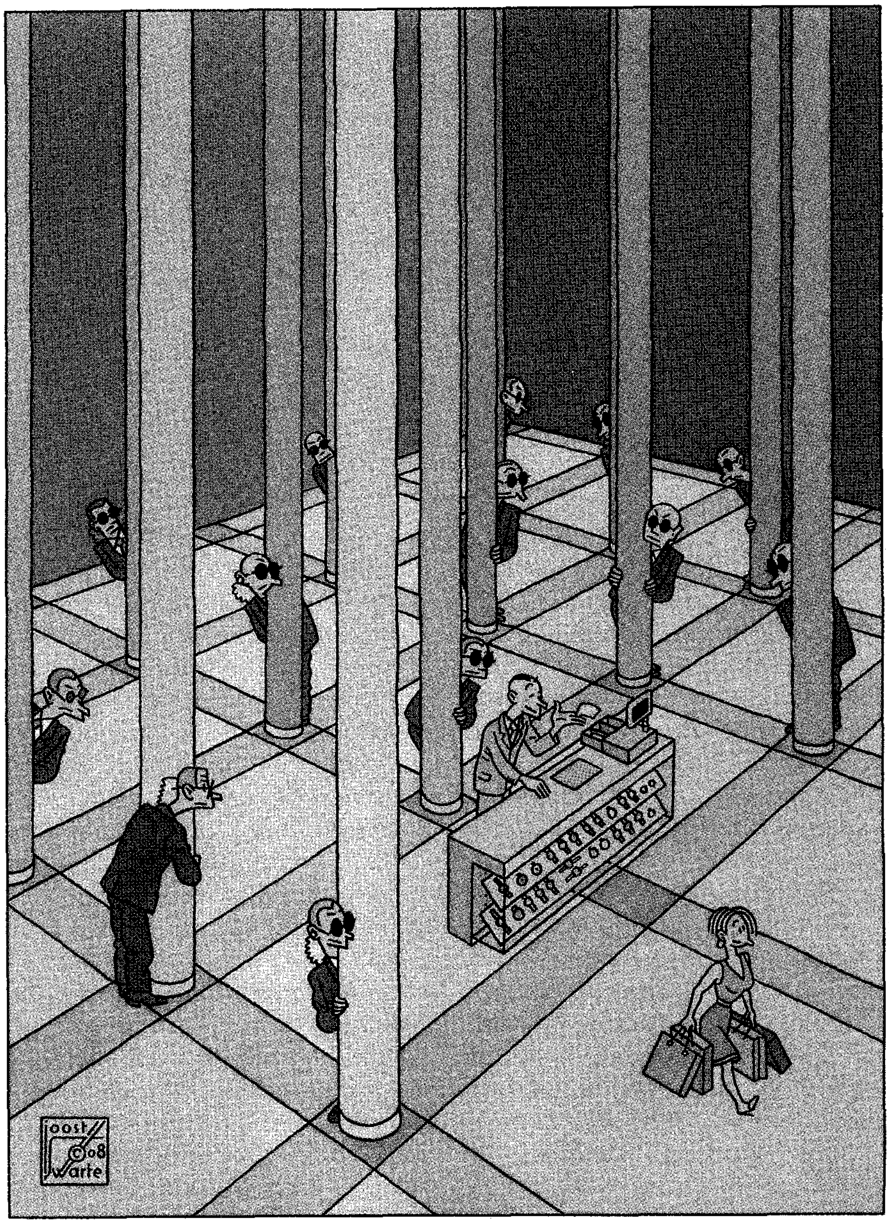
A walkie-talkie lying beside a pair of handcuffs on a camera console crackled. It was a sales associate in one of the denim boutiques, on an upper floor, radioing, breathlessly, to say that he had detected a strong smell of ink in the fitting rooms—a sign that someone was perhaps trying to remove the ink tags from a pair of jeans. (Ink security tags—small conical plastic units that are clipped to clothing—are designed to release staining pigments when removed by anyone but store employees, who have a special device for disassembling them.) Because it is illegal for stores to install surveillance cameras inside fitting rooms, experienced thieves often use the rooms to remove security devices.

One of the camera agents hit a sequence of keys on his keyboard and brought up an image of the exterior of the boutique fitting rooms.

"We have a thirty-nine as per the forty-five," he said into his radio, giving the department's code for a possible theft in progress. The alert went out over the concealed earpieces of the business-suited guards positioned around the sales floors.

On the monitor, the agents watched as one of the loss-prevention department's dozen plainclothes store detectives—a grandmotherly African-American woman carrying a shopping bag—entered the fitting-room area. She came out seconds later and radioed to confirm that a woman was cutting off security devices in one of the booths, and gave a description of the woman. (The booth's louvred doors are designed so that store employees can look in.) She cautioned that she had not seen the woman actually put a pair of jeans into her bag.

A minute or so later, a young woman



Stores lose up to forty billion dollars a year in theft. "Loss prevention" units are fighting it.

JOOST SWARTE

who fit the suspect's description—leather jacket, white cap, sunglasses—emerged from the fitting-room area carrying a large canvas shoulder bag. "Is that her?" the vice-president asked. "Bring the camera more to the left." The agent moved the joystick on his keyboard and the camera swivelled, picking her up as she got into an elevator. The agent hit a few buttons, and an image of the woman from a camera concealed in the elevator ceiling came up on his screen. When she stepped out onto the main floor, he tapped his keyboard and brought up an image of her as she sauntered past the perfume displays toward the street doors.

The camera agent picked up his walkie-talkie and radioed the guards near the exit. "Get a twenty on her," he said—code for "get her location."

"We can't arrest her," the vice-president said. "We have to have an eyewitness that actually saw her put something in her bag, or we have to have it on camera. Otherwise, if we're wrong, or have the wrong person, we've got to deal with a rash of shit. A lawsuit can cost tens of thousands of dollars to defend, and you pay more in punitive damages. If we didn't see it, it didn't happen." He watched the woman approach the doors. He bent forward to scrutinize the monitor. "There's a little weight to that canvas bag," he said, ruminatively, as if about to change his mind. "But . . ."

The woman went out the door. One of the camera agents used a camera mounted on the store's façade to pick her up as she left the store. He zoomed in to follow her up the block. "Sometimes they double back," he said. She disappeared into the crowd.

"We don't like letting them go," the vice-president said. "But when they're successful they always come back. And now her face is burned in our brains. We'll get her next time."

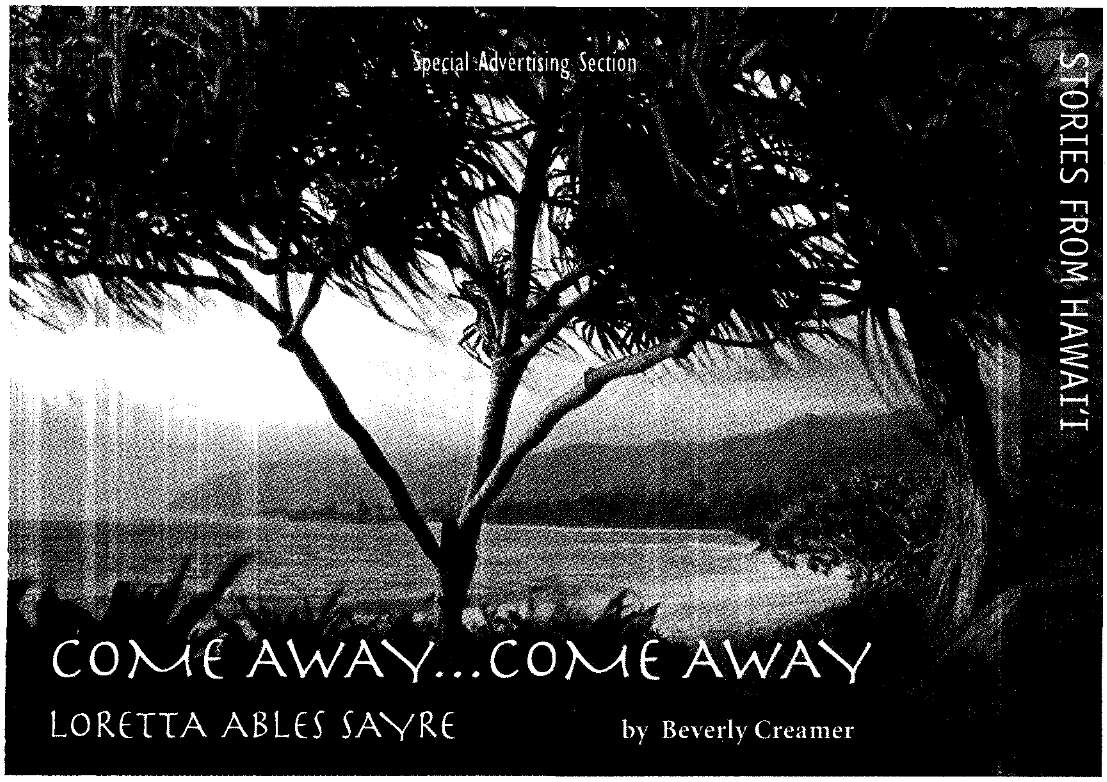
The Orange County Convention Center occupies a pair of low-slung buildings, each more than a million square feet, set among green lawns on an artificial lake thirteen miles from downtown Orlando, Florida. In June, the center played host to the National Retail Federation's Loss Prevention Conference and Expo, an annual three-day event. A record three thousand attendees roamed throughout the Expo Hall, under banners with the motto "PREDICT. PREVENT. PROTECT," and visited the hundreds of booths exhibiting the latest theft-prevention technologies. Two I.B.M. employees demonstrated a video-analytics software program that allows agents to search video data for specific visual evidence, like license-plate numbers. On display nearby was a device called the LaneHawk, an ankle-height grocery-store scanner that uses visual pattern-recognition technology to detect items hidden in the bottoms of grocery carts. (According to a company rep, grocery stores lose an average of ten dollars per lane every day when shoppers fail to disclose items stuffed into the cart's undercarriage.) Throughout the conference, attendees heard presentations by loss-prevention experts and law-enforcement officers, most of which centered on a topic that has dominated the industry for the past few years: organized retail crime.

No one in loss prevention can say precisely when shoplifters began to organize themselves into professionalized gangs, but there is general agreement that one of the first people to isolate the problem was a man named King Rogers. Rogers retired in 2001 as the head of Target Corporation's asset-protection program and now runs his own consulting firm, the King Rogers Group, in Minneapolis. A short, voluble man, sixty-three years old, he is as close as anyone can come to being the star of an industry that is virtually defined by its secrecy. Rogers is a fixture at every loss-prevention conference, and is, in the words of Nate Garvis, the vice-president of government affairs at Target, "one of the giants on whose shoulders we stand." Rogers worked for a short time at the National Security Agency before taking a job, in the late nineteen-sixties, as the head of asset protection at Strawbridge & Clothier, a regional department store in Philadelphia.

In those days, store security was a decidedly less high-tech venture: no cameras, no live video monitoring. Agents were obliged to improvise, hiding among racks of clothes or in empty boxes to conduct surveillance. "I can recall lying in the return-air plenum of a ceiling—the space between the drop ceiling and the main ceiling—having poked a hole in the acoustic tile so I could look through," Rogers told me. "In those days, you often didn't have radios, so you had to signal to your compatriot somewhere on the selling floor that the person you were watching just concealed something. You dropped something gently out of that ceiling—usually a small piece of paper—and let it waft to the ground. That was the signal to go pick them up." When security personnel did spot a thief, they commonly took what Rogers calls a "cops-and-robbers" approach—pursuing the suspect into the street and trying to tackle or otherwise detain him. "I remember working at the downtown Philadelphia store at Eighth and Market, chasing some shoplifter out of the store," Rogers said. "He was running down the street with an armload of clothing and I'm yelling 'Stop!' and thinking, Do I really want to catch this guy? By then, we had those big clunky two-way radios, and I do recall seeing one or two of those being used like a football. They'd bring a fleeing thief to his knees quick."

Sometimes thieves escaping on foot would run into oncoming traffic (or into an innocent bystander). Retailers were responsible for any injuries incurred, and such incidents soon compelled them to take a more proactive approach. In the late seventies and early eighties, many stores began to install closed-circuit cameras and electronic-article-surveillance technology—known as E.A.S. E.A.S. tags, which can be sewn into garments or slipped between the pages of books, contain a small magnetic coil that triggers an alarm at store exits. The technology is still in wide use despite its questionable effectiveness. The problem is not only that false alarms are so frequent (who hasn't set off an alarm at a store exit and been waved through by a weary security guard?), or that thieves have learned to defeat the system with foil-lined booster bags, but that the alarm sounds only *after* a thief has passed through the security gates. "If they've got a load of goods that they intend to convert to money, they're going to keep going," Rogers says—and, because retailers have forbidden loss-prevention agents to give chase, the merchandise is lost.

In 1980, one of Rogers's detectives at a suburban branch of Strawbridge & Clothier noticed a team of four people stealing men's shirts off racks. Two people acted as lookouts while the other two stuffed clothing, hangers and all, into large black plastic garbage bags. The thieves fled the store before they could



COME AWAY...COME AWAY

LORETTA ABLES SAYRE

by Beverly Creamer

As Loretta Ables Sayre steps onto a New York stage eight times a week and takes her place on a make-believe tropical beach, she can close her eyes and imagine being home in Hawaiʻi. "I sit there and look out at that ocean—you can hear the waves crashing," she says. "And I feel as if I'm sitting out in Haleʻiwa, on that wide expanse of sand."

Though Ables Sayre (her Filipino maiden name is pronounced Ah-bless) has gained recognition—and a coveted Tony nomination—for her role as Bloody Mary in the hit revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific," the glamour of the big city can't make up for the simple pleasures of Oʻahu: cooling trade winds and the scent of plumeria; "shave ice" from Matsumoto's landmark roadside store; the sound of the surf at Pounders Beach on the North Shore, its swells turning gold in the late afternoon sun.

The ocean has both a hypnotic and a humbling power in her life. At Sandy Beach, where the rollers break over the reef in a constant cadence, she and a crowd of friends greeted the new millennium by wading waist-deep into the sea, chanting in Hawaiian, cheering the rising sun.

"How do you explain this to people," she wonders. "There's something about those beaches that calms my soul. I close my eyes and I'm there."

Ables Sayre grew up playing on those wide sand beaches of Hawaiʻi in a neighborhood of Navy families and a house filled with kids and music. As a youngster she'd sneak downstairs when everyone else was sleeping, put on the big black headphones, and listen to Mario Lanza and Ella Fitzgerald records till she fell asleep on the living-room floor.

By high school, she was soloing in the school choir; at twenty-one, performing in a Waikīkī showroom act; at thirty, headlining with some of Hawaiʻi's best. And now she's a principal in a Broadway megahit at Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater.

But she's also a star longing to be home. Hawaiian music plays constantly in her apartment and she has convinced the rest of the cast to like Spam *musubi*, an Island favorite. On the day she left Hawaiʻi, she ran around her yard snapping photos of great green monstera leaves, red ti, and torch ginger, wet from a morning rain shower. In Manhattan, they're now up on the walls.

"If I'm going to live here," she says, "I have to have Hawaiʻi with me."

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be detained, but the detective got their license-plate number and phoned the police. The cops apprehended the thieves, booked them for shoplifting, and soon released them on misdemeanor charges—typical in shoplifting cases. But the volume of the thefts, and the shoplifters' brazenness, made Rogers suspect that something more was going on. The following week, a team of thieves using the same method was observed at a different branch, so Rogers enlisted the help of a colleague at the police department and traced the thieves to a tenement in Providence, Rhode Island. The shoplifters, Rogers told me, turned out to be members of a South American gang who were stealing designer clothing from department stores and specialty stores from Boston to Atlanta. "Ultimately, the police had enough evidence to charge them with some elevated theft-larceny charge, beyond shoplifting," Rogers says. "That caused them to pretty much dissipate."

In 1984, when Rogers joined Target (then part of the Dayton Hudson Corporation) as the vice-president of loss prevention, it was not widely recognized that big-box stores were also victims of organized retail crime. "And it was not obvious to *me* right away," Rogers says. "In department stores, the gangs were hitting brand-name and in some cases designer clothes and accessories, but at Target it was the very popular branded-label goods: over-the-counter analgesics, film, batteries, baby formula, smoking-cessation products, condoms, teeth-whitening strips"—any small, easy-to-resell merchandise. "I couldn't understand how there was an aftermarket for those items," Rogers says. "But there obviously was." Stores like Target, Wal-Mart, and Kmart were favorite stops for retail-theft gangs, who travelled from store to store and state to state, wiping out entire shelves' worth of products. Razor blades remain so difficult for retailers to keep in stock that stores like Duane Reade display them behind the cash registers; CVS has installed elaborate push-dispensing mechanisms that release only one pack at a time. (Most large retailers today also keep baby formula and teeth-whitening products under lock and key, along with Wii game software and MP3 players.)

By the mid-nineteen-nineties, Target was the fifth-largest retailer in the country, with around twenty-one billion dollars a year in sales. (Today, Target has annual sales of sixty-three billion dollars.) Target won't release exact figures, but the average shrink rate for retailers is between one and two per cent of sales, which would conservatively put Target's losses in 1995 at around two hundred and ten million dollars. To combat this loss, King Rogers established a national investigations team to focus on organized retail crime. "We had a dozen agents around the country," Rogers says. "They had two roles. One was investigating these professional thieves and professional fraudsters who, also in teams, pass bad checks and use stolen credit cards. The second role was to train asset-protection people how to respond when they identified a possible organized retail gang at work." Rather than detain boosters, agents were told to allow them to think that they had got away undetected, and then tail their vehicles.

In this way, Rogers and his investigation team learned that the stolen goods were entering a highly organized distribution chain that often began with the hundreds of flea markets that had sprung up among the suburban sprawl of cities across the country. Crooked flea-market venders would buy stolen goods from boosters, then put a few samples out on their tables—"as a marketing ploy," Rogers says. "Because the next-level-up buyer, a 'middle buyer'—often ex-cons who had discovered this great opportunity—made a habit of going to flea markets looking for product. When he saw Tylenol on a vender's tabletop, he'd say, 'Can you get me more Tylenol in fifty-count gelcaps?' " The vender, if he did not have the item in stock, would tell his boosters what to go and steal. "We'd catch boosters with lists of stuff to steal all the time," Rogers says. Typically, the middle buyers would sell the products to a "cleaning house"—in most cases, a three-to-five-thousand-square-foot warehouse staffed with undocumented workers whose job was to remove price stickers, E.A.S. tags, and identifying store labels. Often, products such as baby formula would sit in cleaning houses beyond their expiration date, in which case workers changed the dates stamped on the products. (In 2001, authorities in Texas arrested an organized retail-crime gang that had reportedly stored a million dollars' worth of stolen baby formula in rodent-infested garages at an improper temperature.) The cleaned products were shrink-wrapped and put in master cartons to look as if they had been bought from the manufacturer, then sold to corrupt wholesalers who would commingle the stolen goods with legitimately purchased products and sell them back to retailers—often to the same store from which they had been stolen.

In 1998, Target began an investigation of an organized retail-crime ring in Atlanta that was stealing computers, DVDs, stereos, televisions, and clothing, along with over-the-counter medicines and razors. Target's agents learned that the group comprised thirty Pakistani immigrants, most of them illegal, who operated a string of convenience stores. They shipped the stolen goods via UPS to large cleaning and repackaging operations in New York, Maryland, and Pakistan. "We got the Atlanta police department and county sheriff's office involved," Rogers says, "and were finally able to lure the F.B.I. into the situation, because at least one of the insiders in this group was a police officer. Then it became a public corruption case." In October, 1998, the F.B.I. launched Operation American Dream, which resulted in the bust of one of the country's biggest organized retail-crime rings. The gang used more than two hundred professional shoplifters, who stole up to a hundred thousand dollars' worth of merchandise a day from various chain stores—Target, Wal-Mart, Kmart. The bust resulted in eighty-seven arrests, the seizure of four hundred and fifty thousand dollars in cash, and the recovery of more than a million and a half dollars in stolen merchandise. Investigators learned that the gang was also involved in money laundering, illegal-alien smuggling, and car theft.

Rogers retired from Target in 2001 and was succeeded as the head of asset protection by Brad Brekke. A tall, lean man of fifty-two, Brekke worked both as an F.B.I. agent and as a lawyer before being recruited by Rogers, in the late nineties, as an investigator. When he became the head of asset protection, Brekke had the revolutionary idea of

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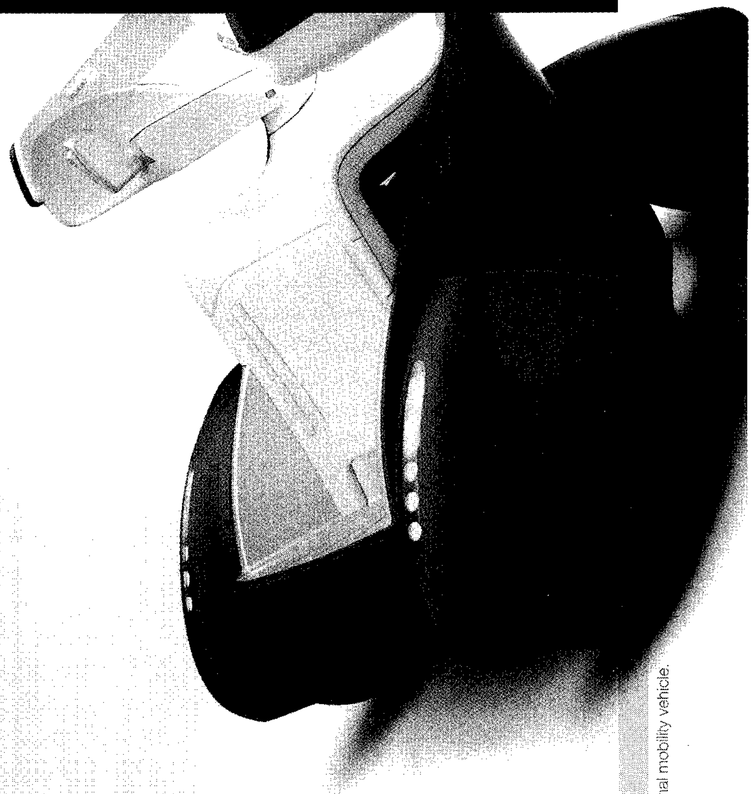

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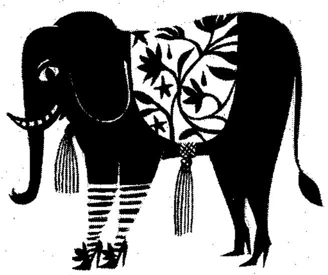
creating a crime laboratory inside office headquarters to combat retail-theft gangs. "We're realists here," Brekke told me recently, when I met with him at Target's main offices, in downtown Minneapolis. "Property crimes generally are not a high priority for law enforcement, nor should they be. So we took the approach that if we could do the front-end work—do the video analysis, the fingerprint and computer analysis—then give it to the law-enforcement agencies, they don't have to spend the time and effort on it."

Target's crime labs are situated on the first floor of a sprawling office complex in an industrial park twenty minutes north of downtown Minneapolis. I was given a tour of the labs by Rick Lautenbach, Target's manager of forensic services. We entered through a series of password-protected doors—Lautenbach punched his personal code into a keypad. "We can't just go into a closet at the back of a Target store and open a crime lab," he explained. "We have to have a facility that measures up to the government's standards for admissibility of evidence."

I was taken to a large, windowless room at the end of the main hallway, where Target operates its latent-fingerprint lab—a facility for detecting and recording fingerprints that are not visible to the naked eye. The room contained a fuming chamber, which resembles a glass-fronted refrigerator. To check for prints, agents place any type of nonporous object—plastic CD cases, metal iPods—in the chamber. A drop of Superglue is put into the chamber in a small tin dish and heated; the heat releases fumes of the glue's active ingredient, cyanoacrylate, which adheres to the moisture secreted by fingertips, creating a visible white print. The prints are then dye-stained with a fluorescent pigment and taken to a small adjoining room with black walls, ceiling, and floors, for photographing and scanning under lights of different wavelengths. "We don't have connectivity to any database with people's criminal history, because we're private," Lautenbach says, "but we can match events together to catch a criminal or criminal gang and we pass that along to law enforcement." Lautenbach told me about a recent case of a man suspected of repeated thefts at Target stores in Arizona. He was captured on a security camera as he picked up several items and put them in a shopping cart. Apparently aware that he was under surveillance, the man abandoned his cart and left the store. Loss-prevention agents retrieved a tissue holder that the man had handled and sent it to the fingerprint lab for analysis. Meanwhile, the investigations team was looking into whether the man was selling stolen items on eBay; recent online sale postings matched his known thefts. The agents made a "controlled purchase" from the eBay seller—a box set of "The Sopranos" on DVD. Lab analysis revealed that the fingerprints on both the tissue holder and the "Sopranos" DVDs were the same. "We turned the fingerprints over to the Maricopa County attorney's office," said Lautenbach. The man was convicted of felony trafficking in stolen property and computer tampering.

Next to the fingerprint lab is the video-analysis laboratory, a small room stocked with desktop computers and video equipment. Two agents sat at a computer and compared security-camera recordings of after-hours "smash and grab" A.T.M. thefts at several Target stores in three states in the South. One video showed thieves backing a Jeep Cherokee through the locked glass entrance doors of a Target, shattering them, then hitching a chain to the A.T.M. and ripping the machine off its moorings as they gunned away. Another tape showed the same crime, involving an S.U.V., at a different location. Though the thieves were masked, and the vehicles were different (the license-plate numbers revealed that both were stolen), the thieves' practiced movements and the precision of their actions suggested to the agents that they were the same crew. Lautenbach explained that, in order to get law enforcement to take on a theft case, Target needs to establish the seriousness of the crimes. "To do that," he says, "we need to establish the scope of the criminal activity across a geographic area, or at least show that a common suspect is involved."



Next, I was shown the computer forensics lab. Here Brent Pack, a burly, bearded man who is Target's senior computer investigator, analyzes digital storage devices seized from suspected retail-crime gangs—BlackBerrys, photo memory cards, cell phones, business servers, and desktop computers. Pack joined Target three years ago, after a stint in the United States Army, where, as part of the Computer Crime Investigative Unit, he analyzed the photographs taken by soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison. ("I had to extract the metadata from inside the pictures and create the time line, because there were multiple cameras taking different photographs and each of them was set to different times," Pack said. "Took about two months to complete and another month to finalize. Then I had to go to court for two years to testify about it.") At the moment, Pack was analyzing a hard drive seized by the police in a phony-check-writing operation that had victimized Target stores. "I'm going through here and looking for any evidence of check-writing software on any of their hard drives," he said, pointing to his computer screen, which showed a JPEG of a bank check. "Drives are so big now—some are five hundred gigabytes—you can't just randomly search," he said. "You've got to be tactical."

Brekke launched Target's crime laboratories, five years ago, with the intention of fighting the "brick and mortar" storefront fences and warehouse repackaging operations that King Rogers had helped to uncover. But since then, Brekke says, the labs have increasingly been used to fight "e-fencing," the resale of stolen goods online through eBay, Craigslist, and other e-commerce sites, where thieves can operate with virtual anonymity. (Sellers on eBay and other sites are not required to post any personal information; eBay says that "such requirements do nothing to effectively prevent the sale of stolen goods and would expose honest online sellers to significant risk for identity theft.")

"Those sites have, overnight, become the world's largest pawnshops," Nate Garvis, Target's vice-president of gov-

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[1] UNAIDS, *2007 AIDS Epidemic Update*
[2] *FORTUNE*, March 2008
[3] *Ethisphere® Magazine*, June 2008

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ernment affairs, says. "It used to be that you'd rip off a stereo, you'd go to a bad part of town and sell it for ten cents on the dollar, and Mrs. Smith, who'd never be caught dead in that part of town, would never find that product. Now you rip it off in bulk, you put it online, you get sixty to seventy to ninety cents on the dollar—because you've cut out the middleman—and Mrs. Smith is shopping in her slippers at her dining-room table."

Brekke says that the explosion of online selling to well-heeled buyers has changed what boosters steal from stores. Instead of baby formula, razors, and over-the-counter medicines, thieves now go after small electronic items and household appliances. According to Paul Ostenson, a senior investigator for Target, and a specialist in the investigation of e-fencing, Dyson vacuum cleaners, which retail for between three hundred and five hundred dollars, have become one of the hottest theft items for sale on auction sites. Thieves often steal the bulky vacuum cleaners through a tactic called "ticket switching": buying a cheap vacuum cleaner for thirty-nine dollars, then removing the U.P.C. bar code and affixing it to a Dyson that costs ten times as much. Some thieves buy their own U.P.C.-bar-code-making machines—available legally on the Internet—and print their own price stickers.

Last fall, testifying before a congressional subcommittee on organized retail crime, Brekke told lawmakers that Internet auction sites need to make "modest changes" to remove the incentives for criminals to sell stolen goods online. He recommended that people who sell up to a hundred thousand dollars a month of merchandise online be required to identify themselves by name on the sites. Arresting individual sellers is not the answer, Brekke maintains, because of the sheer numbers involved. "In the most recent year, Target alone made approximately seventy-five thousand theft apprehensions in its stores. By comparison, the total number of criminal cases in all federal district courts across the country is usually less than sixty thousand in any one year," Brekke told lawmakers. "Even if all the U.S. attorneys across the country stopped prosecuting bank robberies, fraud, drug trafficking, and even terrorism, there would still not be enough capacity to prosecute even the apprehensions made by Target."

It was three-twenty in the afternoon, and the vice-president of corporate asset protection at the midtown Manhattan department store had resigned himself to allowing the suspected denim thief to leave the store. He now went into an adjoining room to greet the store's director of shortage control, a small man in his thirties who wore a well-tailored black suit and had a neatly clipped goatee. His job was to reduce inventory losses due to shoplifting or employee theft. Mounted on one wall were twelve computer screens that showed images of several sales associates as they rang up purchases and moved about the sales floor, straightening clothes on racks and greeting customers. The two men watched the employees on the screens for a moment. "They're persons of interest," the director said. "All of them have been flagged for surveillance."

Despite loss prevention's current focus on organized retail crime and e-fencing, by far the biggest theft problem faced by retailers is internal—the actions of light-fingered employees. Shoplifting accounts for almost thirty-two per cent of shrink; employee, or internal, theft accounts for almost forty-seven per cent—although many experts say that these numbers are skewed, since organized retail-crime rings have begun to recruit store employees as accomplices, and even to send gang members to seek jobs at stores. Whatever the case, in 2006, employees stole about nineteen billion dollars' worth of merchandise from their employers—which is why many loss-prevention departments devote as much time to conducting surveillance on their own employees as they do on customers.

The director of shortage control pointed to one of the screens, on which a salesman in his thirties—I'll call him Jeffrey—was straightening piles of T-shirts and sweaters on an upper floor of the department store. He was a handsome man with close-cropped hair and a perpetual smile. "The first red flag was that he had the highest number of non-receipt returns in his department," the director said. "Everyone else in his department was getting about three returns a week. He was getting five a day."

That was four months earlier, in February. Since then, the loss-prevention team had been monitoring Jeffrey's activities. Using "exception-based reporting" software—a program installed in all the computerized cash registers which looks for irregular transactions—the team learned that Jeffrey was ringing up returns for merchandise that had never left the store, then putting the credit on his own card. He had also been making out E.M.C.s (electronic merchandise credits, more commonly known as gift cards) in amounts of up to five thousand dollars, then giving the cards to accomplices who would come in and shop for merchandise. Camera surveillance revealed that Jeffrey was selecting clothing from the racks, removing electronic security tags, and leaving the clothing in fitting rooms for friends to come and collect at appointed times. In the four months that he had been under surveillance, Jeffrey had apparently stolen and embezzled an estimated hundred thousand dollars' worth of false credit and merchandise from the store.

"The scary thing is that he's coming to work every day," the vice-president of corporate asset protection said. "But he's not working for the *store*."

The director looked at his watch. It was three-thirty—time to arrest Jeffrey.

Two loss-prevention agents came into the room: a woman in a black skirt and blouse and a man with the bulked-up physique of a bodybuilder. The man went to the screens and panned the camera so that it followed Jeffrey across the sales floor.

"I'm salivating at the mouth to pick him up," he said. "It's been a long time coming."

"Your instinct is to jump the gun," the director told me. "You want to arrest him the first time you catch him stealing. But you've got to be patient." For one thing, the loss-prevention team needed to build a solid criminal case; for another, they needed to find out if he was working in collusion with another crooked sales associate.

"O.K.," the vice-president of corporate asset protection said, addressing the two agents who had volunteered to go get Jeffrey: the muscular man and a bespectacled man in his late twenties who was the store's lead investigator. "You've got to be ready for him to deny everything."

The agents nodded.

"So if he becomes indignant and denies everything what're you gonna do? Because the minute you approach him he knows what it's all about."

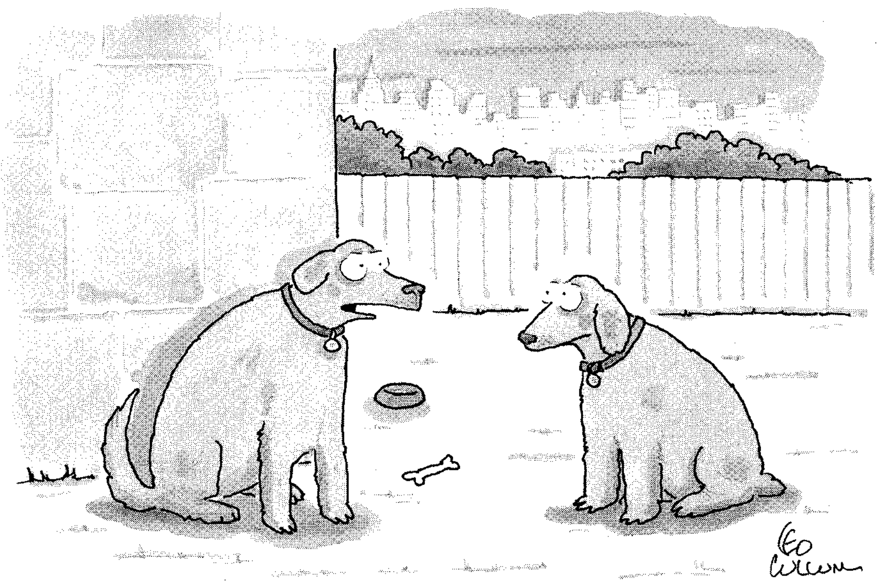
The muscular agent replied that he would not be thrown off by Jeffrey's denials.

"Well," the vice-president of corporate asset protection said, "the ones you think are going to be a problem often aren't, and vice versa. Some confess to everything. They say they killed Kennedy."

The two agents headed upstairs to make the apprehension, and the remaining loss-prevention team crowded around the monitor.

"He was a very nice guy," one of the camera agents said. "Always said hello to me."

"That's when you *know*," the female agent said.



"That's the problem with e-mail—no one to bite."

• •

On the screen, Jeffrey straightened a pile of clothes on a table, checked his hair in one of the mirrors, then walked across the sales floor. The camera agent picked up a walkie-talkie and radioed the arresting agents. "He's going past fragrances," he said.

Suddenly, the two loss-prevention agents appeared from the right side of the screen. Jeffrey stopped, looked at them, and his eyes briefly widened. Then he smiled and shook both agents' proffered hands. (Later, the lead investigator told his colleagues about the arrest. "I said, 'Can you please follow me?' He was calm but scared. You could tell by the way his lips turned pale a little bit.") With one agent behind him and one in front, Jeffrey walked to the elevator, then rode down to the asset-protection complex. When they passed the open door of the internal-theft camera room, the woman in the black skirt and blouse left the camera room and followed them. She was the lead interviewer. They disappeared into one of the interview rooms down the hall and shut the door.

The purpose of the interview was not to get Jeffrey to confess—they felt that they had the evidence—but to get him to reveal details of where the stolen merchandise was going, how long he had been stealing and how much, and whether he was working with others in the store. The team was particularly interested in Jeffrey's colleague, a young man I'll call Alex. Many of the customers to whom Jeffrey had issued fraudulent gift cards had gone to Alex to redeem them, and Alex had also been overriding the computer denials on stolen credit cards.

At five o'clock, after an hour and a half of questioning, the woman emerged from the interview and joined the vice-president of corporate asset protection in the camera room. "He admits to the fraudulent E.M.C.s and credit cards," she said. "And he talked about boxing up merchandise for his friends. He was getting four hundred for each item."

"Did you get him to roll over on Alex?" he asked.

"I can't get him to give up Alex," she said.

The vice-president scratched his head. "O.K.," he said at length. "Bring the other schmuck down—Alex. I don't see any reason not to. I wouldn't get him in a headlock." He meant this figuratively; the team uses no form of physical persuasion in interviews, he told me. "I don't want him going back to the sales floor and bitching to H.R. Just ask him, 'Why are these guys coming to you with fraudulent E.M.C.s?' Offer him soda. Water. Whatever he wants."

Two agents were dispatched, and a few minutes later Alex, a tall man in a summer-weight beige jacket, appeared in the hallway, his head hanging low. He was led into a neighboring interview room. (It later turned out that Alex was not involved.)

The director of shortage control dropped into a chair in the hallway. It was now six-thirty. The woman in the black skirt and blouse went back into the first interview room to continue talking to Jeffrey.

"Who knows how long it's going to take?" the director said. "He's got a lot of explaining to do." One thing, he thought, seemed certain. The amount of merchandise involved meant that Jeffrey would probably be charged with a felony. "He's going to jail," the director said, but without relish. "You stare at this expensive stuff all day as an employee—stuff you can't afford to buy. It's a temptation."

"You're on commission selling," the vice-president added. "When times are good, you make a fortune. September through the holiday season, you're raking it in. Then Christmas is over, no one is shopping, gas is four dollars a gallon, and your paycheck went from fifteen hundred to five hundred a week and you have to pay off those bills from that Caribbean vacation you took when the money was rolling in. So you think, I'll credit my card for a thousand dollars and make out a fake return. When it works the first time, you try it again. But next time you load a little more onto your card." He shrugged. "And the way this economy's going?" he added. "We're going to be busy." ♦

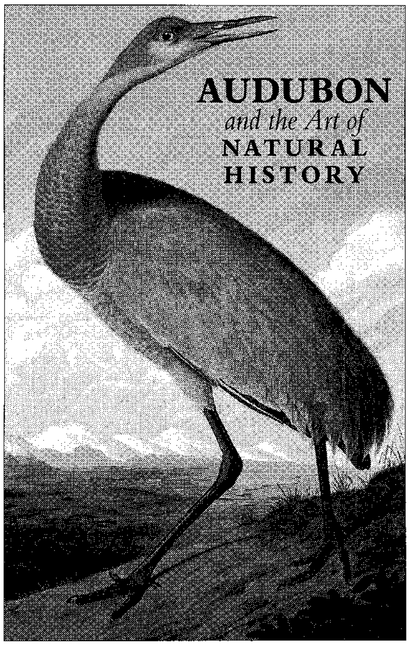


Plate 261, *Hooping Crane,* J. J. Audubon
The New-York Historical Society Edition

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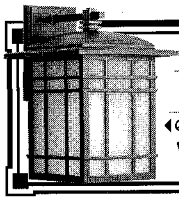
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ON AND OFF THE AVENUE

SOLE SISTERS

For women who can never have enough shoes.

BY PATRICIA MARX

Boys have cars, girls have shoes—nineteen pairs, on average, according to a *Consumer Reports* poll. And so: I'll take a hedge fund's worth of Manolo Blahnik stilettos, and you can have one Rolls-Royce. Or a litter of Roger Vivier kitten heels for me, one Lamborghini for you. A colosseum of Dolce & Gabbana gladiator sandals for me, and a Ferrari for you. Or how about I take a country club full of Tod's loafers, and you can have a Range Rover? Me, a mall of UGGs; you, one Volvo wagon. Me, a tribe of Masai Barefoot Technology sandals; you, one Toyota Prius. Me, a swamp of Crocs; you, one VW Bug. Actually, you can keep the Crocs. I'll call a cab.

I'm sensing that, despite all the hot-rod talk, when it comes to discussing slingbacks and peep-toes, certain guys still can't wait to change the subject. So maybe I'll try again?

Freud believed that, for many men, shoes represent female genitalia. But aren't they more like visible underwear? Shoes can be about comfort or about allure, but I dare you to find any that are about both. Figuring out how to combine walkability and sexiness is the Grand Unification goal of cobblers. For instance, after Nike acquired Cole Haan, several years ago, the company started to put its Zoom Air technology, developed for field sports, into high heels, hoping to create the perfect hybrid. And, yes, Cole Haan's tortoise-patterned patent-leather OT Air Pump, with a three-and-a-quarter-inch heel and sole cushioning, is quite stylish (Cole Haan, 620 Fifth Avenue, at 49th Street, and other locations; $275). Nevertheless, it probably won't wow the crowds as much as, say, the studded vintage platform boot with a five-inch heel for sale at Bess (292 Lafayette Street; $320), or the d'Orsay pumps at Dusica Dusica that are constructed from delicate metal chains (67 Prince Street; $950).

Then, there's Taryn Rose, who trained as an orthopedic surgeon at the University of Southern California before starting her eponymous footwear company a few years ago. Just how stress-free do Rose's anti-shock models make your feet feel? "It's a shoe, not a mattress," a woman said the other day, as she tried on a pair of chocolate-colored ankle boots with a padded foot bed and extra arch support (Taryn Rose, 681 Madison Avenue, at 61st Street; $545).

Of course, some women, and I am one of them, continue to march forward in their spindly heels, in the belief that if the shoe pinches wear it—and keep quiet about the blisters (Band-Aid Activ-Flex Blister Block Stick, medshopexpress.com, $7.25; Leukoplast Tape, westons.com, $6.79). But men, be forewarned: The pressure that a ninety-eight-pound woman in stilettos presents to whoever is under her heel is greater than that exerted by the unshod foot of a six-thousand-pound elephant.

High heels weren't always a girl thing. In the fifteen-hundreds, the riding shoes of French noblemen were fitted with raised heels so that their feet stayed put in the stirrups. Over the next few decades, heels inched higher on dress shoes, particularly among men of privilege. The term "well-heeled" came to mean a man who could afford such extravagances. (Kangaroo boots at R. M. Williams, 46 East 59th Street; $369.)

Short King Louis XIV wore shoes with six-inch red-painted heels (often embellished with scenes of military victories) and decreed that only members of his court could wear similar ones. But, lucky us! The U.S. Constitution grants us the right to prance around in Christian Louboutin's "C'est Moi" shoe boots with the designer's signature red sole (Christian Louboutin, 965 Madison Avenue, at 75th Street, and 59

Horatio Street; $825). Or, for the same amount of money, we may choose to fill our tanks with enough gasoline to drive barefoot from New York to Los Angeles and then back to Kansas City. But what's money? New York's Luxury Institute recently reported that "high-net-worth females" rated Louboutin as the most prestigious shoe brand, with Manolo Blahnik finishing second. How are the two labels different? "Christian is funkier," a salesman named Colin at the Madison Avenue Louboutin boutique told me. "He's the shepherd of the shoe world." Perhaps trying to explain this statement, he continued, "Do you want to know what Christian's inspirations for his shoes are?" Before I could guess, Colin gave it away. "Flowers, birds, and furniture."

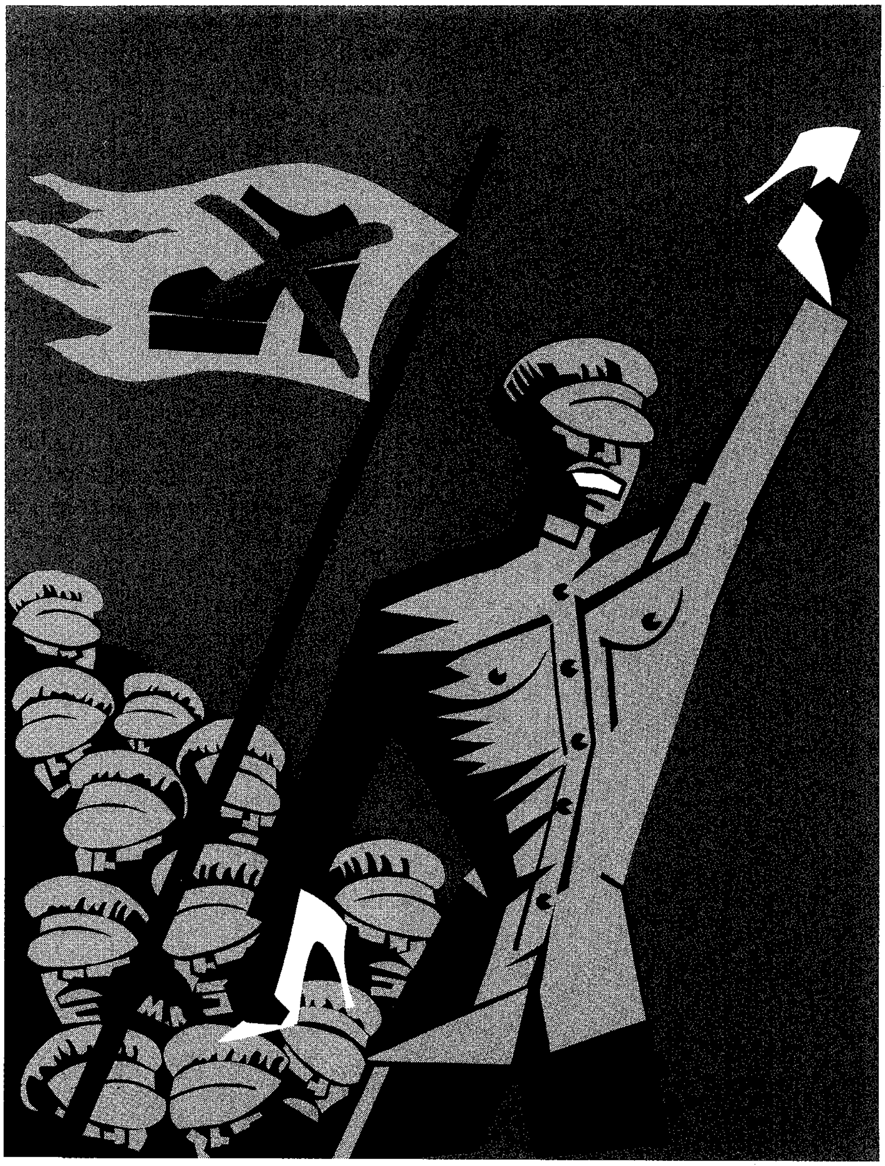
The inspirations of the Canadian shoemaker John Fluevog, according to his Web site, float into his office on little angel wings. His puckish pumps and booties, with their upturned rounded toes and squat flared heels, seem straight out of Tolkien. In Fluevog land, shoe styles are grouped into Families. Minis, for instance, seem to be the kind of pumps Minnie Mouse might wear, and Radios are lace-ups made of perforated leather, I guess to look like speaker grilles (250 Mulberry Street; $235 to $399 for Mini shoes, $245 to $255 for Radios). The Capitalist oxfords are not exactly conservative, but one could picture a basket weaver or R. Crumb wearing them to a funeral ($269). Most Fluevog Families have a motto, which is written on either the sole or the insole of each shoe. The motto of the Teapots, with their spout-shaped heels, is "Serve and Be Served." Just when you were thinking that this might be a fun place to take a kindergartener shopping, consider the Body Parts family ("Your Body Parts Are Not Communal Property"). The Body Parts platform pump comes in a shiny scaled pattern, allegedly reminiscent of an endangered Egyptian reptile ($359). "Do you know what this is supposed to be?" a salesman named Alan asked me, pointing at the tapered cylindrical heel. "The leg of a fat horse?" I said. Alan laughed, presumably at my un-dirty mind.

What is it with shoe salesmen, anyway, that they feel obliged to tell us so much about a shoe's pedigree? I would have liked the metallic desert boots at Sigerson Morrison even if I hadn't been informed that one of the label's designers wears them all the time (Sigerson Morrison, 987 Madison, at 76th Street, and 28 Prince Street; $425).

Nowhere is the footwear lore more fanciful than at Berluti, the Madison Avenue outpost of the Paris-based men's shop, where the shoes, inspired by the whims of customers like Andy Warhol, have been known to come in sets of three (a pair with trompe-l'œil patches and an extra that's plain) or in un-matching pairs (Berluti, 971 Madison, at 75th Street). The leather used in these shoes looks like burnished wood and can be scarred with tattoos of your choice ($2,030), engraved with excerpts from manuscripts from the court of Louis XV ($1,500), or custom-tinted by the in-house colorist. The soles of the shoes in the latest collection are molded to leave wolf-paw prints ($1,400). During the Vietnam War, American special forces experimented with boots whose rubber soles were designed to simulate the footprint of a Vietcong peasant sandal. And the bottoms of King Tut's shoes were decorated with drawings of his enemies so that he could crush the opposition underfoot. Berluti's Empreinte du Loup line, according to the company literature, has a different purpose:

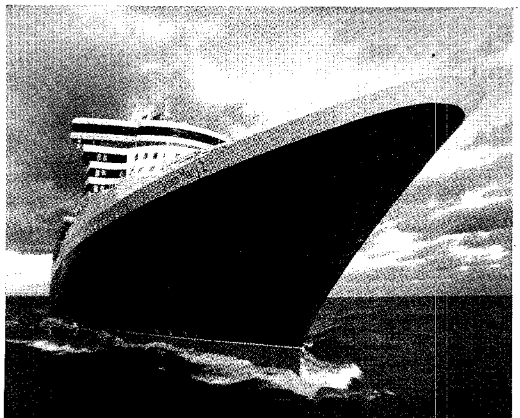
> Trace your path,
> leave your tracks,
> dance with the wolves.

The shoes are the creation of Olga Berluti, a descendant of the firm's



The stiletto retakes ground from an opposition group whose platform was the platform.

MICHAEL ROBERTS



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founder. Her designs range in price from $1,300, for off the rack, to you-name-it for bespoke, which usually take at least five months to construct. A client in Africa ordered a pair encrusted with pearls, for which he paid several hundred thousand dollars. If this seems steep, remember: along with your purchase, Berluti includes a tin of complimentary shoe polish and, upon request, a DVD called "A Lesson in Shoe Shining."

Males in the habit of throwing around female amounts of cash for their brogues and loafers can do so at John Lobb (680 Madison Avenue, at 61st Street), the hundred-and-fifty-year-old firm, which is now owned by Hermès, where handsome made-to-measure shoes go for around $5,800 ($9,000 for boots). If you are a man for whom time is money, however, prepare to spend eons of it, because at least four fittings will be called for—more than it takes to get a dental crown. Lobb's Lopez loafer or Zilca cap toe, however, will probably last longer than a piece of porcelain glued to your molar. By the way, Mr. Lopez and Mr. Zilca, like several others, have had shoes named in their honor not because of their heroic actions but because they are frequent buyers.

With the possible exception of Messrs. Lopez and Zilca and a few others, men don't get it when it comes to shoe shopping. (Women, you may skip this paragraph.) A woman loves trying on shoes because she can do it without taking off her clothes. So, no matter how fat or unlovely she feels, she can slip into a Giuseppe Zanotti silver stiletto sandal with a crystal-encrusted skeleton of a trout swimming up her ankle and, just for a moment, believe that she is as come-hitherish as her foot (Bergdorf Goodman; $850).

How many shoe lovers does it take to buy a pair of Marc Jacobs pumps with chunky Lucite heels overlaid with a sliver of salmon patent leather to create the illusion of stilettos? Two. One to try the shoe on and say, "Seven hundred and eighty-five dollars is a lot of money, and besides, I already have them in black, and could I really dance all night in these and does it matter that I no longer have any feeling in my toes?" and the other to say, "You can't live without them" (Jeffrey, 449 West 14th Street).

The toe, in my opinion, is the Achilles heel of the shoe this season. Specifically, the trapezoidal square toe, which looks as if it had been on its way to being V-shaped when it met with a terrible accident and was lopped off. Also, the toe that is so pointy you could drill for oil with it: the Jimmy Choo Lizzie Pierced-Toe Pump (Jimmy Choo, 645 Fifth Avenue, at 51st Street, and 716 Madison Avenue, at 63rd Street; $585). And, speaking of pointiness, word is that the stiletto has returned. It never went away, of course. It just flounced around uptown for a few years after an opposition group took over, whose platform was the platform. But there is a new shoe afoot—a crossbreed made up of a concealed platform in the front supported by a streamlined heel of great stature. Regard, for example, the Rose 'N Roll platform sandal at Roger Vivier, which has a crinkly satin flower detail and a five-inch heel shaped like a thorn (Roger Vivier, 750 Madison Avenue, at 65th Street; $1,450).

Mirthful types should check out a shop called Irregular Choice (276 Lafayette Street), where the footwear is festooned with ruffles, ribbons, buttons, fake jewels, paper flowers, plastic strawberries, vinyl-covered silk screens of big-eyed dolls, and glitter. For men, there are copper-colored balmorals with polka-dot soles and long, pointy, turned-up jester-style toes ($95). The shoes at United Nude (268 Elizabeth Street) look like computer-generated diagrams for buildings that will never get funded. It's not surpising, then, to learn that the co-founder of and shoe designer for the company is an architect—namely, Rem Koolhaas, nephew of *the* Rem Koolhaas. Shoes in the Eamz collection have splayed tube-shaped aluminum heels with capped rubber tips. The Möbius, inspired by the shape of a Barcelona chair, is formed from a single band of carbon fibre ($275 for the Eamz pump; $190 to $220 for the Möbius).

You may have noticed those slipperlike things that everyone in Southampton and Palm Beach has been wearing for years. They are Belgian Shoes, supremely comfortable loafers that are sewed inside-out and then

eps of [illegible] quality in the most popula

The Golden Age of Ocean Trave

e day. Now is the ideal time to

information, contact your Travel Professi

turned the right way around by Belgian artisans who work from home. The shoes are available only at the Manhattan Belgian Shoes boutique (110 East 55th Street), where they come in every imaginable color and material (lime-green lizard calf, printed pony, ostrich, wool), some with flat leather soles, others with a low wedge heel made of rubber, but all with a preppy little bow on the oval-shaped vamp ($295 to $350). One recent afternoon, a white-haired woman was trying on a Kelly-green pair with pink piping, and I asked her how many pairs of Belgian Shoes she owned. “I don’t want to say the ‘T’ word here,” she whispered. “But I’ve been wearing Tod’s, and I have about fifty pairs of them. I just recently started wearing Belgian Shoes. I have only five pairs, but we’ll see.”

In the enormous shoe department at Saks Fifth Avenue (it has its own Zip Code—10022-SHOE), there are nine types of Tod’s ballerina flats, all with the brand’s signature pebble sole ($395 to $695). The shoe has an elasticized back, so that, off the foot, it curls up into a fetal position and resembles a cashew. Every designer seems to offer a version these days, some with embellishment, some in exotic leathers, and it is always a surprise to learn the sticker prices. Miu Miu’s metallic rendering is adorned with brooches that look like doorknobs (100 Prince Street and other locations; $495). Prada’s has running-shoe details (45 East 57th Street and other locations; $250). Steve Madden’s has perforations (flagship store: 540 Broadway, at Spring Street; $69.95). Lanvin’s silver python had an opening bid of $800 on eBay.

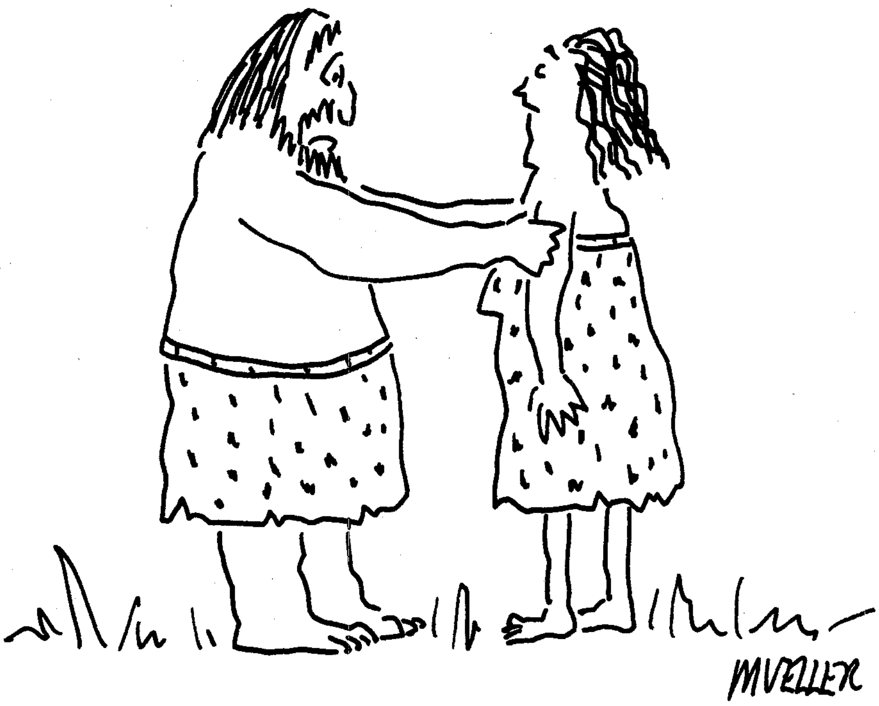
You can also get a pair at Payless (unadorned in black, silver, muted gold, and pink; $19.99). This chain is the largest footwear outlet in the Western Hemisphere, and New York City has twenty-two branches. At Payless, you can pick up a perfectly decent pair of sneakers ($14 to $30) or some slouchy faux-leather boots with a wraparound strap reminiscent of this season’s popular Chloé boot, which comes in actual suède ($40 at Payless; $765 at Chloé, 850 Madison Avenue, at 70th Street). At the Thirty-fourth Street Payless store, I saw a young woman jumping up and down, testing out a pair of fuchsia patent pumps with four-inch heels. Or maybe she is the Payless cheerleader (110 West 34th Street; $22.99).

At Harry’s Shoes for Kids (2315 Broadway, at 83rd Street), the salesmen are still measuring feet with the metal Brannock slide device (patented in 1928), and children are still having the same arguments with their mothers and fathers that you used to have with yours. “No shoes without laces, period.” “But Daddy, they’re so cool!” “Mommy, Shana has these ones—can I get them?” “Maybe next time.” (Geox pink sneakers with hearts outlined in magenta glitter; $66.) For babies too young to wheedle and argue, Heelarious has squishy stilettos—in patent leather or satin (heelarious.com; $35).

Much has been written about athletic shoes, but isn’t there always something else to say? Did you know, for instance, that William J. Riley, who founded the New Balance Arch Support Company, in 1906, based his designs on the feet of chickens, whose three-clawed feet provide those creatures with perfect poise? You know, of course, all about sneaker endorsements, but let me remind you that Adidas is reportedly paying the N.B.A. star Kevin Garnett some two million dollars a year for at least as long as he plays basketball. Still, Tiger Woods might have the better deal: supposedly a hundred million to wear Nikes for five years, after which time he can tee off in clown shoes if he likes (thirteen-and-a-half-inch-long Jumbo Tennis Shoes, clownantics.com; $29.95).

There are a lot of saucy sneakers around right now. You can get a Swarovski-crystal-riddled low-top at Christian Audigier (273 Lafayette Street; $265). The unisex styles in Puma’s sleek Mihara Yasuhiro line include such details as laser-cut soles resembling piano keyboards (421 West 14th Street and other locations; $130 to $180). I got a skating vibe as soon as I walked into Dave’s Quality Meat, where the sneakers hang from meat hooks on the exposed-brick wall (7 East 3rd Street). T-shirts are kept in the deli case, shrink-wrapped in plastic-foam trays. The yellow-and-black checked Vans high-tops are steezy ($55), and I also liked the Nikes in pale-pink and tan corduroy with a lemon-yellow tip and a green tongue ($75).

I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t tell you how to save the planet. Terra Plana, the recipient of the 2008 Drapers Footwear Award for Ethical Footwear Retailer, believes that shoes should not leave a large carbon footprint (260 Elizabeth Street). The company uses vegetable-tanned leather (no nasty chromium sulfate), pure latex, material



“Stop me before I invent plaid!”

salvaged from seat belts and tweed jackets, and recycled innersoles (*ewwww!*). The sandal made from a single piece of rubber with a toe wedge springing from the sole is something that only Shrek could love. The shoes even come in "e-leather"—leather woven with textiles ($55 to $250).

For every pair of TOMS Shoes that you purchase, the company gives a pair to a shoeless person in South Africa or Argentina—and then someday, in a perfect world, maybe that person will be able to walk to a shoe store and buy some more TOMS Shoes. The shoes are nice basic flat espadrilles, and they come in a variety of fabrics and prints, including, if you want to wear a bumper sticker on your feet, an election-year model, with the word "Vote" on one shoe and a donkey on the other (tomsshoes.com; $45—Republican model also available).

Every shoe designed by Natalie Portman is vegan, which means no leather, fish, milk, or eggs. That leaves polenta. Portman is a guest shoe artist this year at Té Casan, a two-story shoe shop that sells her handiwork along with that of a permanent roster of young non-actor shoe designers (382 West Broadway). Most of the shoes are sculptural, and many are very appealing. Here, far away from the patent-leather-pump zone of the Upper East Side, you can find curiosities like Gaetano Perrone's sandal with a marble-size brass ball that dangles on a chain from the ankle strap ($795 flat, $995 high) and Gianluca Soldi's peep-toe smothered with leaf-shaped tiddlywinks ($595).

Iris is another fastidiously curated boutique, though with a less bohemian aesthetic (827 Washington Street). This shop sells only six labels, but it stocks each collection with more dedication and audacity than department stores, whose taste is more restrained. Moreover, some of the designers, like John Galliano and Veronique Branquinho, you won't find elsewhere. This is the sort of place where sky-high European runway models gesture toward Chloé's red studded ankle boots and say, "I like the stuff going on here with the buckle, but I don't do flats. Anything higher?" ($1,245 for flat, $1,845 for slouchy red boot with high heel and no buckle.)

Let's say you don't have exactly what it takes to strut around in your strappy green python Jimmy Choo sandals with a zipper up the front and a nearly five-inch heel ($1,295), and you end up falling off your pedestal and fracturing your fibula. Don't worry. The Leather Spa (formerly Shoe Service Plus) can repair your faceted 4.7-inch laminated plastic heel. This is the place used by Blahnik, Louboutin, Chanel, Gucci, Barneys, Neiman Marcus, and Bergdorf Goodman. It charges a lot, too, so you won't be quite as upset about your doctor bill (10 West 55th Street; $40 and up for a broken heel; thousands to set a broken leg).

Doctors, as it happens, have very particular taste in shoes. According to a physician at Sloan-Kettering with an excellent footwear aesthetic, surgeons like clogs, but internists prefer rich-looking loafers (clogs with ventilation holes, clogsonline.com; $64.95; Gucci loafer, for men, with a silver horse bit, neimanmarcus.com; $595). Nurses, of course, wear nurse shoes (shoeline.com has forty-nine styles of white shoes; $35 to $67.95).

Instead of moping around on your crutches, waiting for the other flip-flop to drop, start making plans for the Bergdorf Goodman semi-annual shoe sale (January and July). If you are like the average woman, you have worn a quarter of your shoes only once, but so what? It's because of this sale that I am able to mentally calculate thirty, forty-five, and sixty-five per cent with astonishing celerity. At this madly popular event, you can observe shoe lunatics duking it out with each other for, say, last season's Louboutin alligator wedge, a little number that happens to be unaffordable even at thirty per cent off ($2,432, plus tax). The victor, clutching her spoils—namely, a single left or right shoe—will then be approached by a fetching young salesman who will ask, "Do you need a mate?" And perhaps this, as Cinderella knew all along, is what shoes are really about. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

From the Times.

Top Bush hands are starting to get sweaty about where they left their fingerprints. Scapegoating the rotten apples at the bottom of the military's barrel may not be a slam-dunk escape route from accountability anymore.

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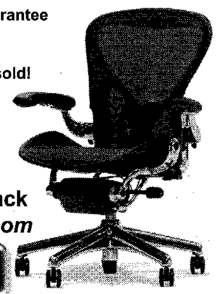

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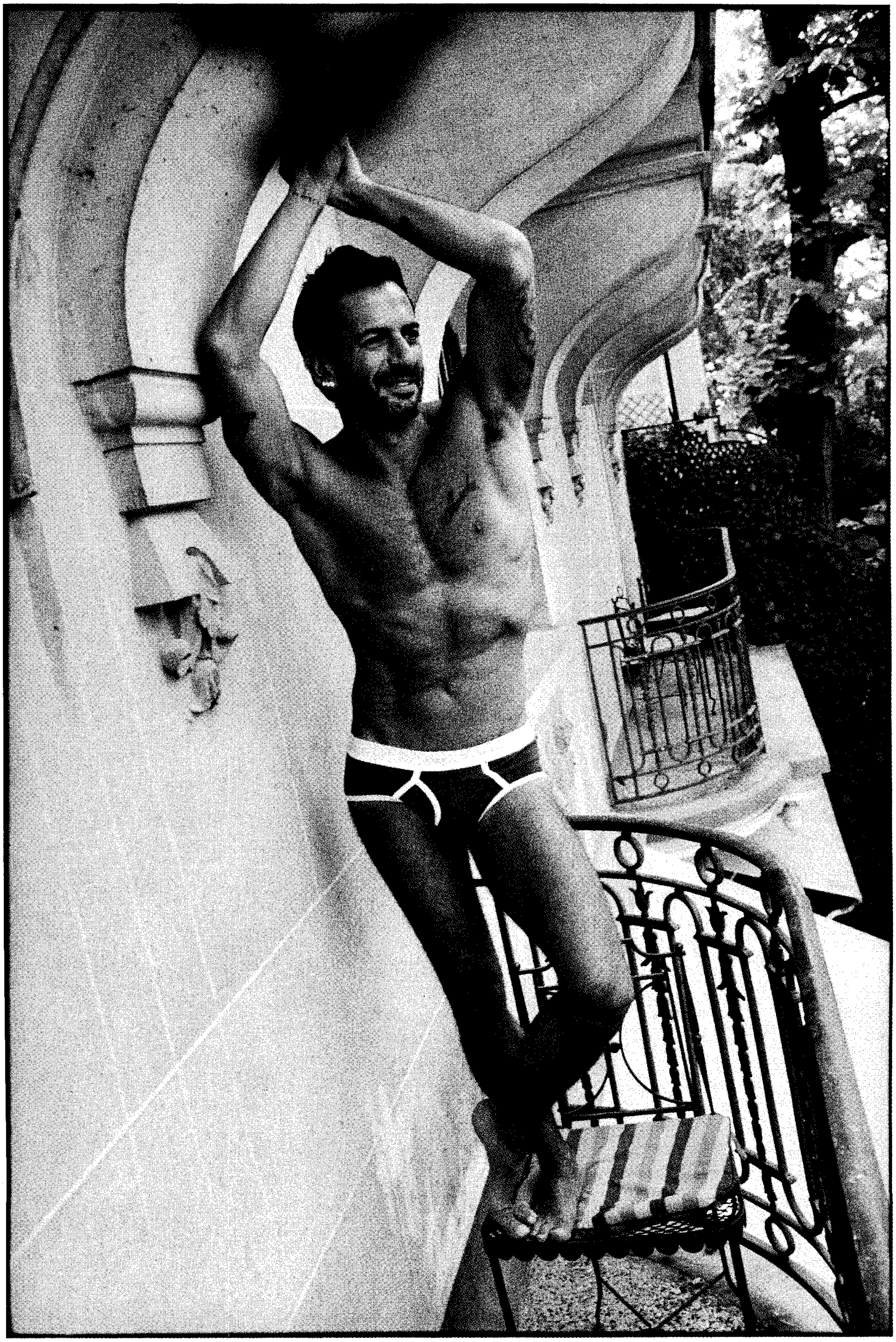


PROFILES

ENCHANTED

The transformation of Marc Jacobs.

BY ARIEL LEVY

The two individuals perhaps most responsible for transforming the West Village from what it was ten years ago into what it is today are Carrie Bradshaw and Marc Jacobs. The former is a bubbly, self-involved, inordinately chic blond journalist who chronicles the lives of New York women, her own life in particular. The latter is a fashion designer who has become famous as the creator of the shoes and clothes and, most prominently, handbags worn by the women whom Carrie chronicles and the women who wish that they could be her. Carrie Bradshaw, of course, is make-believe, the protagonist of the "Sex and the City" franchise, whereas Marc Jacobs is a real person. Or he was once.

Jacobs used to be a chubby Jewish guy with long hair and glasses who made his name—and got fired—by designing a "grunge" collection (of very expensive silk shirts printed to look like flannel, and fine cashmere sweaters with the appearance of thermal underwear) in 1993, as the head of womenswear at Perry Ellis. Five years later, he was hired as the creative director of Louis Vuitton, France's premier luxury-goods house, where he was seen as an enfant terrible, and nobody was quite sure if he would make it work. But, in the decade since Jacobs arrived at Vuitton, he has quadrupled its business and, with the company's backing, watched his own Marc Jacobs Collection and his less expensive secondary line, Marc by Marc Jacobs, grow into a global business, with a hundred and sixty stores, in nineteen countries. You see his handbags, with their quilting and clunky hardware, on every other girl in Manhattan—like flip-flops, except that they cost thousands of dollars.

Jacobs's physical appearance has come to reflect his success. At the age of forty-five, he is no longer remotely plump. His hair is cut short (and was, briefly, bright blue), and he has started wearing contact lenses. He looks like a cartoon superhero: muscular, bronzed, shining with diamonds. And he has accomplished the comic-book feat of transforming himself from hardworking Everyman (Bruce Banner, Clark Kent, Peter Parker) into something elevated and different and not merely human. But this is fashion, not crime-fighting, so the goal isn't to fly or to leap tall buildings or—God forbid—become invisible. No. What one wants is to be a cultural touchstone, to represent and embody a life style, the way Karl Lagerfeld does, or Donatella Versace, or Carrie Bradshaw.

Jacobs could almost be in one of the Annie Leibovitz photographs that make up his current Louis Vuitton ad campaign. (They feature Sofia and Francis Ford Coppola relaxing in a field with a monogrammed Vuitton tote; Keith Richards playing guitar in a hotel room next to a custom case; Mikhail Gorbachev and a Vuitton satchel in the back seat of a limousine near a remnant of the Berlin Wall—all in a golden, larger-than-life light.) Almost, but not quite, because Marc Jacobs's brand of success is unapologetically less dignified. Jacobs has twenty-eight tattoos, among them one on his left arm that says, "Bros before hos," a phrase borrowed from pimp culture that expresses a credo of allegiance to men before women, comrades before conquests, or, as Jacobs puts it, "friends before a piece of ass." Until recently, he had a boyfriend named Jason Preston, seventeen years his junior, who was a retired prostitute, and who had the Marc Jacobs logo tattooed in large letters up the length of his forearm. The couple issued regular updates on their romance on their respective pages on MySpace.

Jacobs's retail domain stretches across several blocks of Bleecker Street, rendering the surrounding area a kind of Marc Jacobs theme park and, naturally, a prominent stop on "Sex and the City" bus tours, which regularly crawl along the cobblestones, shuttling young women to the Magnolia bakery to sample the cupcakes favored by Carrie. A handbag that Jacobs designed for Vuitton was so prominent in the movie that it was more a character than a prop.

All this makes Jacobs very happy. There is nothing he loves more than seeing his work woven into the culture. With the Japanese artist Takashi Murakami, he created a series of handbags featuring the stately Vuitton monogram reimagined in candy colors on a white backdrop and, more recently, interspersed with a camouflage print, which was named "monogramouflage." The collaboration has been so successful that its biggest problem has been the frequency with which the purses are knocked off and illegally hawked on street corners. Jacobs, delighting in copying the copycats, installed faux street venders selling real bags at the opening of Murakami's recent exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. It was possible, that night, to buy a three-thousand-dollar handbag off a folding table from a guy in a skullcap and a sweatshirt who was being paid an hourly wage to wear that costume. Jacobs is amused by such things—things that seem like other things. His collections often include trompe-l'oeil.

Jacobs also enjoys the idea that the brand is the product being sold. (This is unusual for a fashion designer: designers tend to think of their work as art and get snippy at the suggestion that they are simply peddlers of schmattes and image.) A recent print campaign for the Marc Jacobs Collection shows Victoria Beckham, née Posh Spice, wearing Marc Jacobs clothes and sunglasses and emerging from boxes and bags that bear

Jacobs in Paris: "That's what I think everyone should aspire to in life—being shameless." Photograph by François-Marie Banier.

his name—she is a human product, wrapped.

Jacobs is a human product, too, as famous for what he means as for what he does. In market research conducted for Daisy, a perfume he was introducing (named after one of his dogs), women at a mall in the Midwest were asked if they'd heard of Marc Jacobs. Many said yes, but when they were asked who he was, they often replied "a rock star" or "an actor" rather than "a fashion designer." Probably, they had noticed his name in a gossip column. They might have seen pictures of Jacobs smoking cigarettes at parties with celebrities. Or perhaps they'd just felt his potent commercial presence when they were riding a red bus down Bleecker Street.

WE DID NOT MAKE OURSELVES

We did not make ourselves is one thing
I keep singing into my hands
while falling
asleep

for just a second

before I have to get up and turn on all the lights in the house, one after the other, like opening an Advent calendar

My brain opening
the chemical miracles in my brain
switching on

I can hear

dogs barking
some trees
last stars

You think you'll be missed
it won't last long
I promise

I'm not dead but I am
standing very still
in the back yard
staring up at the maple
thirty years ago
a tiny kid waiting on the ground
alone in heaven
in the world
in white sneakers

I'm having a good time humming along to everything I can still remember back there

How we're born

While Marc Jacobs the brand is at least as prominent a resident of the new West Village as Sarah Jessica Parker, the actress who played Carrie Bradshaw (and who lives around the corner from the Bleecker Street Marc Jacobsland), Jacobs himself resides in Paris, in a sparkling Batcave filled with millions of dollars' worth of contemporary art, and many, many ashtrays. (If he were to be in one of his own Vuitton ads, the signature accessory would be a monogrammed cigarette case.) "I'm going to smoke *a lot*," he said one evening in early summer, returning from the gym after his daily superhero workout. "Forgive me."

Jacobs smokes at the office, at the table, in his bedroom, in the car on the way to and from exercising. He smokes and smokes Marlboro lights, and he talks and talks about working out at the gym, his favorite place lately. "The gym to me is like in 'A Chorus Line' it's the ballet," he said. "Everything is beautiful at the gym, everyone looks amazing. You just think it's like one big healthy circus going on out there: the bodies are great, people are jolly, and, even when they're complaining about how strenuous it is, there's, like, a kind of very good, positive, we're-all-doing-something-good-for-ourselves . . . And it's two and a half hours that I'm not smoking." He took a drag of his cigarette. "I am a true addict in that whatever makes me feel good I want more of, whether it's good for me or not."

He wore a thick gold Rolex and a white shirt unbuttoned to his sternum, and he had carefully trimmed black stubble on his tan chest and his strong chin. He was sitting on one of two brown velvet settees he has in his living room, a grand space accented by a fluffy white life-size sculpture of a sheep (the work of Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne) and an astounding view of the Eiffel Tower. On the coffee table were silver bowls of sweet peas and peonies and green, unripe strawberries that were so expertly arranged they looked like jade carvings. When you are in the home of Marc Jacobs, every tabletop vista of purple glass and silver objet, every clever combination of exquisite furniture and costly sculpture is so refined that, despite the cigarette smoke wafting through the rooms, you get the sense that you are breathing rare and expensive bottled air.

Jacobs doesn't have a butler like Bruce Wayne's Alfred Pennyworth, but he does have a chef, Susan, a Californian with wild gray hair who was wear-

Made to look up at everything we didn't make

We didn't
make grass, mosquitoes
or breast cancer

We didn't make yellow jackets

or sunlight

either

I didn't make my brain
but I'm helping
to finish it

Carefully stacking up everything I made next to everything I ruined in broad
daylight in bright
brainlight

This morning I killed a fly
and didn't lie down
next to the body
like we're supposed to

We're supposed to

Soon I'm going to wake up

Dogs
Trees
Stars

There is only this world and this world

What a relief
created

over and over

—Michael Dickman

ing red tights, red high-top sneakers, a white smock dress, and a flowered apron, and who kept bringing out plates of bacon-wrapped figs and very small vegetables. "Susan brightens up the grayest of days," Jacobs said, with a kind of wistful gratitude. He also has two bull terriers, who were upstairs in their crates that night, because, Jacobs said, if they were let out the barking and the chaos would be unending. (As it was, there was a lot of barking. Every ten minutes or so, Jacobs would call, "Daisy, it's O.K.!") He has selected dogs that require an unusual amount of attention.

From where he was sitting on the sofa, Jacobs could see works of art by Andy Warhol, Francis Picabia, Georges Braque, John Currin, Elizabeth Peyton, David Hockney, Ed Ruscha, and Richard Prince (with whom Jacobs collaborated on an extremely successful line of handbags). Jacobs collects art the way he lifts weights, the way he smokes: with great fervor. "All this is mine for the time being," he said. "Where it'll end up and who it'll go to, what other places it'll be, I don't know." He glanced at the paintings and drawings on the walls. "I don't think they're mine forever. They're just mine now."

Jacobs is well aware that he has shape-shifted from a withdrawn schlump in eyeglasses into something . . . special. "Somewhere along this nutrition-gym thing, I started to develop a sense of, I don't know, a sense of confidence," he said. For Bruce Banner, it was gamma rays; for Marc Jacobs, it was free weights. He went on, "All of a sudden, before I knew it, I started to say, Gee, I'm really happy with the work we've been doing. I'm really happy with the house I live in. I'm really happy with the way I look when I look at myself in the mirror. I spend *hours* in the bathroom now. I used to spend five minutes! But I like taking a shower. I like shampooing my hair. I like putting on moisturizer. I like wearing jewelry. All of these things I used to think, That's not for me. I'm on the floor picking up pins or I'm sketching all day, what does it matter what I look like? And then I discovered, you know what? It does matter. It makes me *feel* good. I get it! I went for a manicure and a pedicure this morning, and I *understand* when I look at my hands and they're not, like, scabby and bleeding—it's great!" He has made his home a museum and his body a work of art beautiful enough to reside there.

Jacobs has the word "perfect" tattooed on his right wrist. "Because I am a perfect being in a perfect world where everything that happens must be completely . . ." He let that thought go. "It was from something that I was studying at this rehab that I went to." Jacobs has been to rehab twice, once in 1999 and again in February, 2007, for alcohol and cocaine abuse. "It felt so right to me when I read it: that I have a choice. We all have a choice in how to look at things, and when things don't go the way I like I tend to think they're a problem. Well, you can look at something as a problem or look at it as a learning experience or an opportunity for growth or whatever. This idea that everything happens for a reason and is perfect and you will benefit from it even if you can't see the benefit—it's just a nicer ideal to subscribe to than 'Oh God, I've got all these problems and life is full of obstacles.' " Rubbing his finger over the word on his wrist, he said, "I put it there to remind me, for when I'm looking at myself and wishing that I could be stronger in this way or better at that thing, and I can just go *No. I'm exactly how I need to be.* So, perfect."

Earlier that day, he had been expressing these ideas—firmly—to his current boyfriend, a handsome Brazilian advertising executive named Lorenzo Martone. According to Jacobs, Martone was upset by the avid coverage that Jacobs's (and, consequently, Martone's) romantic life receives in tabloids and blogs. (On May 6th, the Web site Gawker ran a photograph of Jacobs and Martone, looking dashing in tuxedos, along with the post: "Trendy Wendy fashion designer Marc Jacobs escorted yet another new gentleman friend to last night's Metropolitan Museum Costume Institute Gala. . . . He could be another MySpace find, or some aspiring hanger-on who stumbled into one of the stores one day. . . . What a revolving door this man has! Keeping all the hookers, porn stars, and Mensa members straight—heh—can be difficult.") Jacobs told Martone to "man up" and not pay any attention to the stories.

Jacobs may think that all difficult things are opportunities rather than obstacles, but the truth is that being a tabloid star is not something that he finds particularly difficult. "There is definitely part of me that just loves the idea that I'm the headline—I do get some weird thrill out of that," he said. "I'm human. I love attention. Actors don't go onstage because they don't want attention. If you show your art, if you show your fashion, that's also a very human thing, and, in terms of contemporary life and the twenty-first-century fascination with personalities, I like that I get out of that fashion-designer box and become, I don't know, *personality* box or *celebrity* box. I love that! It's fun." Jacobs recently named an ostrich-skin handbag the BB, after a blogger named BryanBoy, who writes about him frequently.

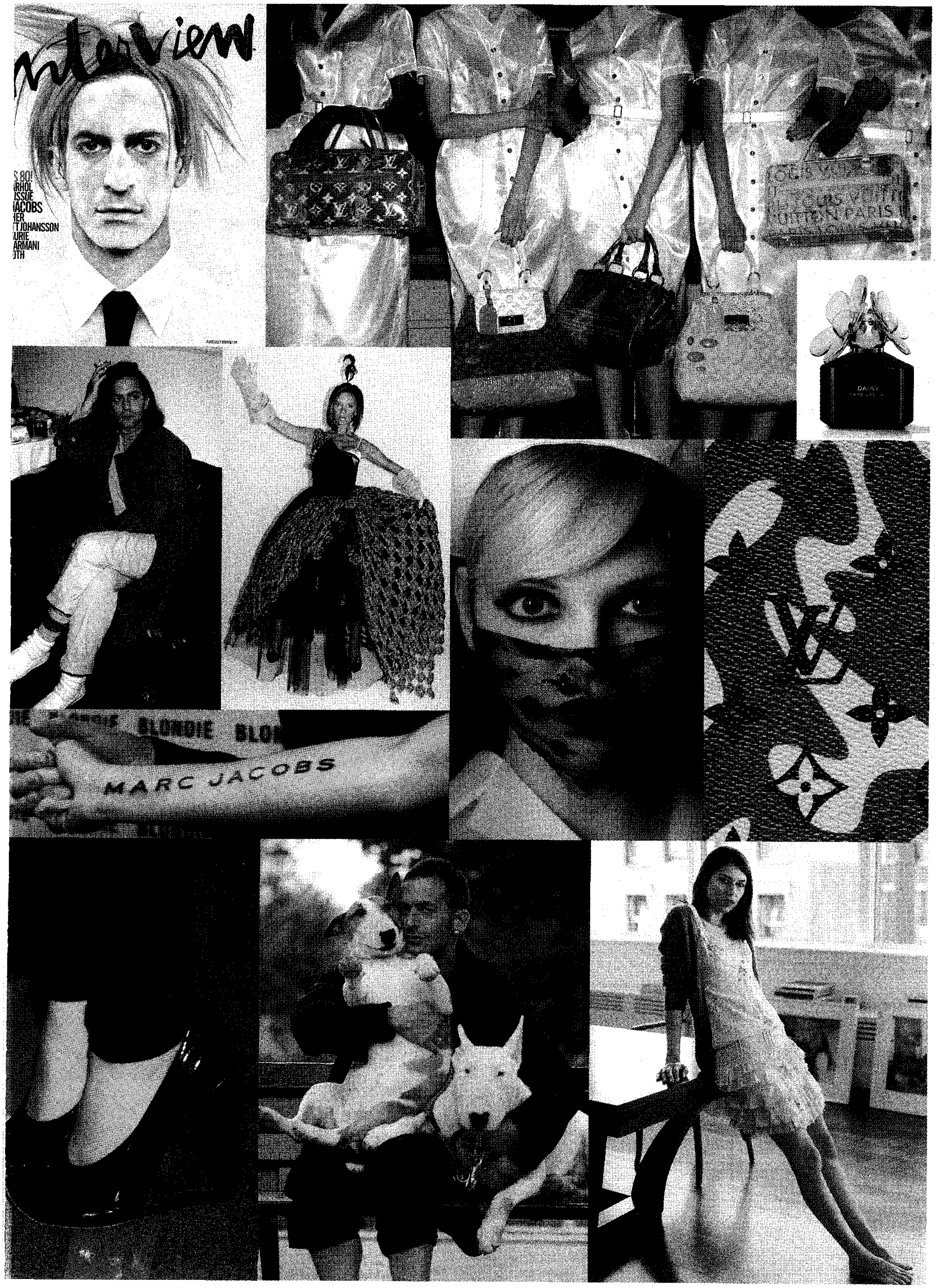
Jacobs is a reality-television star without a reality-television show. His personal traumas and dramas are tracked by a wide audience, some of whom care that he is perhaps the most influential and talented American designer of his generation, and some of whom are interested in him exactly the same way they are interested in the characters on "The Real Housewives of Orange County." Jacobs's vision has transformed the luxury-goods market—you can feel the reverberations of his early inspiration that a sloppy flannel shirt could be rendered in fine silk, that the low could be high, and that streetwear could be fashion, in everything from the advent of the now ubiquitous two-hundred-dollar pair of jeans to the frayed hems and distressed elbows on the jackets that Karl Lagerfeld has designed for Chanel in recent seasons. "Marc is a great, great designer—his talent is stronger than it's ever been before—but he also has a very acute sense of how to deal with the media, how to *use* the media," Anna Wintour, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue*, said. "If you look at the kind of women he's drawn to, whether it's Sofia Coppola or Lindsay Lohan, he always taps into them at exactly the right time. To be honest, I don't think Marc would be in the press the way he is if he didn't want to be."

Of an item that ran in Page Six, Jacobs said, with outrage and delight, "Last Tuesday, they had me making out with my ex-boyfriend Jason Preston at Pastis and bad-mouthing someone I went out with for four days. Well, first of all, I did not bad-mouth the person I went out with for four days, second of all I was not getting back together with Jason Preston, and, fourth—or first!—of all, I wasn't even in the city of New York on that Saturday! I was in Paris, France. My current boyfriend said, 'Marc, you know I don't believe it, but so many people have asked me about it.' I was, like, '*You* put me on a plane Friday night! How can you be listening to this?' " Last month, Page Six misreported that Jacobs had married Martone.

Jacobs walked outside to the back garden, to take in the evening amid the boxwood. "I like the fact that people are sort of commenting on my appearance," he said. "I work on these things! So to have them recognized, even if some-

Carolyn
Christy
Dita
Julianne

Jacobs's world. Top: Spring-Summer, 2008; as Warhol; Richard Prince handbags. Middle: Stephanie Seymour; with Jason Preston; downtown, 1990; Victoria Beckham; the Richard Prince launch; monogramouflage, a print designed with Takashi Murakami. Bottom: with Robert Duffy; high heels; with his bull terriers; Sofia Coppola.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JOHANSSON
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MARC JACOBS

times I don't like the way they're recognized, I like that they are, and I feel good that I can admit that, instead of being ashamed." He paused. "I'm going to get a 'shameless' tattoo next," he said, the Eiffel Tower sparkling behind him in the night sky. "That's what I think everyone should aspire to in life: being shameless."

A few days later, Jacobs was in his fashion-designer box, sitting in a stuffy conference room (smoking) at the Vuitton headquarters, on the Rue du Pont Neuf. He was listening to Madonna on the stereo and going through fabrics with several members of his staff, in search of the prints and textures they would use to design the Spring, 2009, collection. "Gross, gross, gross," Aisling Ludden, an outgoing Irishwoman in patent-leather peep-toe pumps, who has worked with Jacobs for eight years, said. They were looking at a fuzzy purple fabric with a geometric pattern. "That's a horror, isn't it?" They moved on to a cream-colored silk embroidered with little tree branches.

"It's always tough at the beginning," Jacobs said. "We all want to be responsible in terms of not overbuying fabric. But it's kind of unavoidable, because we have to get started, and there are deadlines, and the thing is, it's often not the first thing you respond to that you care as much about in the end. But you kind of can't get to point Z without going from A to Y." It's only in movies that fashion designers think, Eureka! This season, Eskimos, or whatever it is. In actuality, a collection comes together in fits and starts, and there's no guarantee that it will come together at all. Even when Jacobs's work overtly reflects his current obsessions—as in the early grunge collection he made while he was besotted with Nirvana and Hole, or his Spring, 2008, collaboration with Richard Prince, in which models dressed as the eerily erotic nurses that Prince likes to paint (Jacobs owns several of Prince's paintings)—the concept congeals incrementally.

"That's a crazy one," Jacobs said, flipping through a book of sequinned netting samples. "A couple of crazies. I think we've gone down this road before—"

"Get rid of it!" Ludden shouted.

"And I don't think it ever goes really far."

Madonna was singing "Ticktock, ticktock." Jacobs sighed. "Sometimes I think other people have this ability to do it differently and know exactly what they want to do and say," he said. "The way my mind works is somebody else has got this so down that they don't make mistakes and their process is so much more linear than mine. I'll think that, but, at some point, you know what? This is my process and I don't know how to do it any other way." He didn't stop and look at his "perfect" tattoo, but, of course, he knew it was there. "I'm sure there are people who can't afford—who don't have the luxury of being quite as organic as we are," he went on. "We work up until the last minute." As a result of this tendency to work until the bitter end—and past it—Jacobs's Fall, 2007, show in New York started two hours late, prompting the critic Suzy Menkes to say, "I would like to murder him with my bare hands and never see another Marc Jacobs show as long as I live."

"Are you going to the gym today?" Jacobs asked Joseph Carter, the head of womenswear for the Marc Jacobs Collection.

Jacobs's assistant came in and told him that Angel was there to see him. People looked at one another in a funny way. A few moments later, a very beautiful, very tall young woman wearing an enormous hat made of feathers, many strands of pearls, a four-tiered black lace skirt, and hot-pink satin high-heeled shoes came into the room. "I bring something for you!" she said triumphantly, and thrust a bottle labelled "Tokaji aszú" at Jacobs.

"Oh," Jacobs said. "Is that alcohol?"

"Ees sweet wine!" Angel replied.

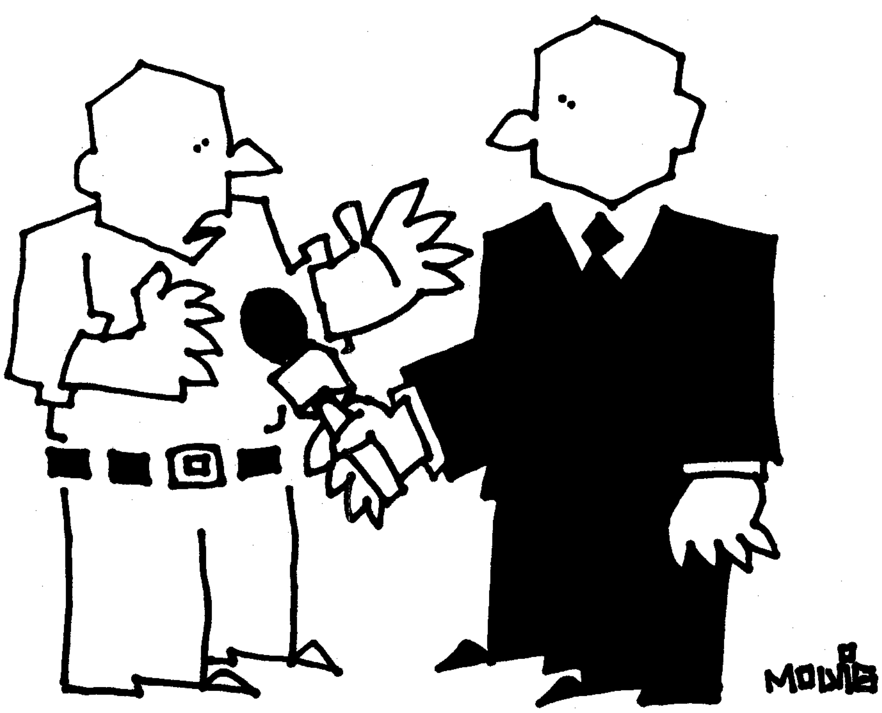
"Mmm. Thank you. I don't drink, but I'll serve it to my guests."

Angel was led away to change into a dress. "That's a girl who goes to my gym and she wants to be a model," Jacobs said, "so I told her she could come by and I'd take her measurements. You should see what she wears to the gym—you know, *outfits*. Spandex and stretch tulle."

Angel came back and Jacobs asked her to show him her walk. She marched down the hallway in a dramatic fashion. "Perfect," Jacobs said.

"Zatseet?"

"Yeah," Jacobs told her. "That's it. Come spend a few minutes with me and then I have to get back to work." He led her into his office, which is wallpapered with pictures of pills on a brown background (a gift from Damien Hirst), and closed the door.



"He was a great neighbor, always happy to lend you a cranial saw or twenty feet of surgical tubing."

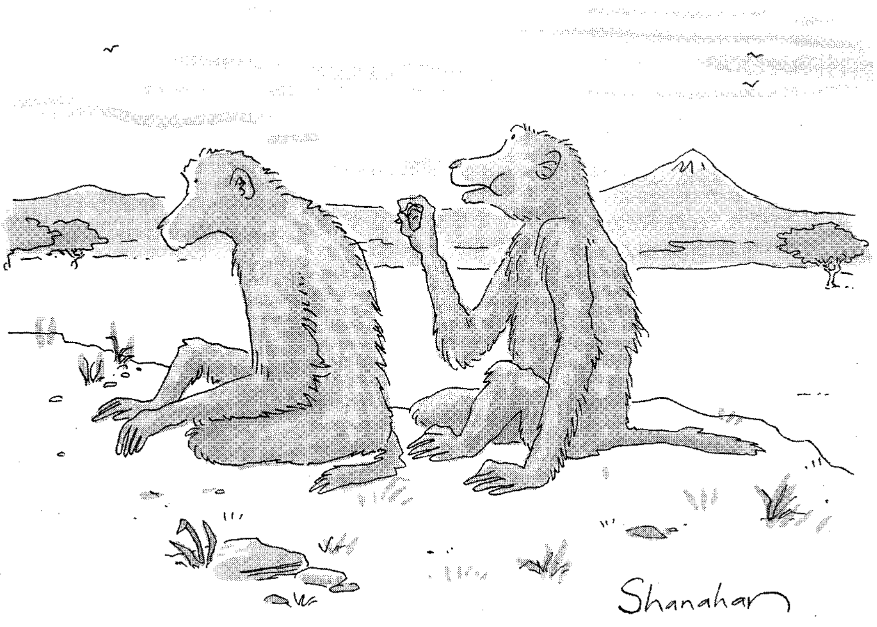
PAGE 94, FROM TOP: KARL PROUSE/GETTY; JUERGEN TELLER; BILLY FARRELL/PATRICK McMULLAN; LOUIS VUITTON (GRAFFITI); BILLY FARRELL/PATRICK McMULLAN. PAGE 95, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: INTERVIEW; BILLY FARRELL/PATRICK McMULLAN; COTY PRESTIGE (PERFUME); LOUIS VUITTON; BILLY FARRELL/PATRICK McMULLAN (NURSE); PAUL JASMIN/CPI; KOTO BOLOFO; MARK SAVAGE/CORBIS; STEVE AZZARA/CORBIS; RON GALELLA/GETTY; JUERGEN TELLER (BECKHAM)

"That's a particular case," Ludden said. "She's really invaded his personal space." Ludden smiled. "That's very Marc—he's definitely always got one eye on the underdog. If there's a bunch of people in a room, Marc will pay attention to the sadster."

Jacobs gave Angel a good fifteen minutes, returned, and lighted a cigarette. "Every girl in the world wants to be a model."

"Was that outfit a joke?" Ludden asked. "Like, is this a reality-TV-show trick, do you think?"

Jacobs laughed. "If you think that was weird, you should've been in there," he said, exhaling smoke in the direction of his office. "I am *definitely* going to the gym today."



"Did you switch conditioners?"

• •

Superheroes tend to be orphans of sorts, and Marc Jacobs is no exception. His father, an agent at the William Morris agency in New York, died when Jacobs was seven. His mother is still alive, but he doesn't see her. "I haven't spoken to her or my sister and brother in years and years," he told me. "I never feel like it's a bad thing. I mean, my mom's very, very sick—mentally ill. She didn't really take care of her kids."

Jacobs was brought up by his paternal grandmother, in an apartment at Seventy-second Street and Central Park West. "She had a very bad relationship with her sister, whom I never knew, but I guess there was some argument and they never spoke again," he said. "Whenever I would mention something about my family, my grandmother would bring up the story of her sister and she would say, 'We haven't spoken in years, so you'll get no argument from me.'"

When Jacobs was in his teens, and a student at the High School of Art and Design, he would go to Studio 54 all night, sometimes bringing his books along so he could go straight to class in the morning. "I had a ball," he said. "I mean, I really did." He went to France for the first time at seventeen, and "cried like a baby" on the plane home, because he felt so sure that he was meant to be a Parisian. "Living with my grandmother, I just kind of grew up feeling like I'm not going to be obliged to spend Thanksgiving with a bunch of people I didn't like—or who didn't like me! I shouldn't do anything, or shouldn't feel anything. I either *do* feel or I *don't* feel. I'm not going to *should* feel. Whether we're talking about contemporary art or we're talking about family, pretending that I feel something I don't feel doesn't really achieve anything. People say, What if something happened to one of them? Well, if that happens and I regret that, that'll be the way it is. But right now it's not something I'm regretting, so I can't act on that." When Jacobs says that people should be shameless, he is talking about something more than exhibitionism. He seeks a kind of relentless authenticity.

His grandmother died in 1987, but in his adult life Jacobs has had another guardian: Robert Duffy, a tall, tanned, silver-haired man of fifty-three, who has been Jacobs's best friend and his business partner for twenty-four years. When he was thirty, Duffy, the son of a steel executive, wanted to go into business with a young designer. Jacobs was attending Parsons School of Design, and Duffy went to see the fashion show he put on for his graduation. "These three sweaters came out that were just like the most awkward proportions and shapes and colors, and they just looked so *right* on those girls," Duffy told me. "There was nothing intimidating about the clothes—I found them very *friendly*, and I still to this day do. He's never lost that childlike quality that he has in him when he's designing, and it's just something that I love the consistency of. Wherever his influences come from, whatever it is, I can always tell if he's had a hand in something." Duffy has "1984" tattooed on his right hand, in honor of the year that he and Jacobs formed their partnership.

Every year, Duffy travels to Asia to visit the Marc Jacobs stores there—forty-six in Japan, seventeen in China, sixteen in Korea, ten in Taiwan, eight in Hong Kong, four in Malaysia, three in Singapore and in Thailand, two in the Philippines, one each in Vietnam and Indonesia, and another about to open in Macau. The day before he was to leave on this year's trip, Duffy was sitting at a table in the Marc Jacobs office in Manhattan, where he works with Jacobs for about five weeks before every show, when Jacobs is in town. "That's our desk," Duffy said, pointing across the room at two desks, back to back, in front of the windowsill, where the seven Council of Fashion Designers of America award trophies that Jacobs has won stand in a row. "Mine's the left side and his is the right side, but when I used to work over there"—Duffy pointed to the left side—"he used to work over there, too. So then the whole desk became his. So I moved over here." Duffy pointed to his seat at the table. "So now he sits where you're sitting"—across the table from Duffy. "It's horrible! I'll have all my papers and my notes and my margins and my, you know, audits and my shit on the table and I'll come back and there'll be *spinach* on my audit. Or he'll take this thing that says 'confidential' and all of a sudden he'll flip it over and start sketching things, and I'm, like, where's that confidential audit that no one's supposed to be touching or looking at? And then I'll find it months later in the design studio."

Duffy says that his relationship with Jacobs has been one of the few constants in Jacobs's life during the past two and a half decades, and, in spite of that—or because of it—he is never surprised by Jacobs. "When he decided, or *we* decided, or originally *I* decided, to get him clean and sober, I got him to a doctor and I got him to a nutritionist, and so his body started changing, and he started taking an interest in his health. He started morphing into this person that he always sort of didn't ever want to be. He always took a certain pride in being an outsider and sort of chubby and nerdy and wearing glasses, having awkward muses and friends and things." Before Victoria Beckham, Jacobs's ads starred women with more obvious glamour, like Jennifer Jason Leigh and Winona Ryder.

"People were reacting to him very differently, in a way that I don't think he ever thought he would like," Duffy continued. "That just led to his fascination with celebrities, and he started watching these reality shows that I've never watched in my life, and then he started dating Jason, the call boy—a self-promoter." It was the exposure moment, and Duffy said he never doubted that it would "play itself out." Leaning against a wall near the windowsill was a framed cartoon of a woman selling her soul to the Devil for tickets to a Marc Jacobs show.

"Marc becomes enchanted with certain things at certain times," Duffy said. He watched Jacobs's interest in art, for instance, flower into a penchant for collecting (which has at times necessitated borrowing large sums of money). "He was buying art until I was, like, 'Marc, stop! You've got to pay your taxes!' " Duffy predicts that this particular passion will persist, but that it has peaked. "He took it from collecting personally to getting artists to work at Louis Vuitton," Duffy said. "He made what he was doing personally a trend, a cultural thing." Then, there was the matter of the bull terriers. "When he wanted to get a dog, it was, like, 'Oh God, we've got to get *two*, and they've got to be bull terriers, and they've got to be *crazy* and they have to be brought into the office *every day*.' " Jacobs has tattooed likenesses of both his dogs on different parts of his body.

"I'm terrified of the day that he decides he wants to start gardening," Duffy said. "Because we'll have, like, Central Park in here or something." He was happy that Jacobs seemed to be finally—if impermanently—content. "You never know what's going to trigger something," he said. "He's hypersensitive, and so insecure. About his talent he's *so* insecure."

It's fun to watch people turn into pictures. You start out with a short, frizzy-haired woman in a pants suit and high-heeled boots, but then she lights a cigarette and makes a grouchy smirk, the flash explodes, and, *voilà:* Fran Lebowitz.

On the evening of the Council of Fashion Designers of America awards gala, at the New York Public Library, the little courtyard in front was crawling with beautiful women making faces, and assuming poses not found in nature, for the cameras clicking all around them. The exception was Victoria Beckham, who was wearing a pouf of a dress made from hundreds of heart-shaped pieces of fabric (by her date, Marc Jacobs), and who always looks as if she's having her picture taken, no matter what she's doing. Hebrew lettering was tattooed down her long, lean neck. "It's in Jewish," she said. "My husband's part Jewish."

Jacobs walked toward the library entrance with Harvey Weinstein and his wife, the fashion designer Georgina Chapman. "That Murakami thing!" Weinstein barked.

"Oh, it was great!" Jacobs said, smoking.

"It's ridiculous!" Weinstein shouted. "You made him! Ridiculous!"

"That's a great color on you," Jacobs told Chapman, who was wearing a dark-crimson gown. "No, it really is."

"I designed it," Weinstein joked, pawing at his wife's shoulder.

"Oh, he does everything!" Jacobs retorted. "I want to be you when I grow up, Harvey."

"You stole all your ideas from me," Weinstein said.

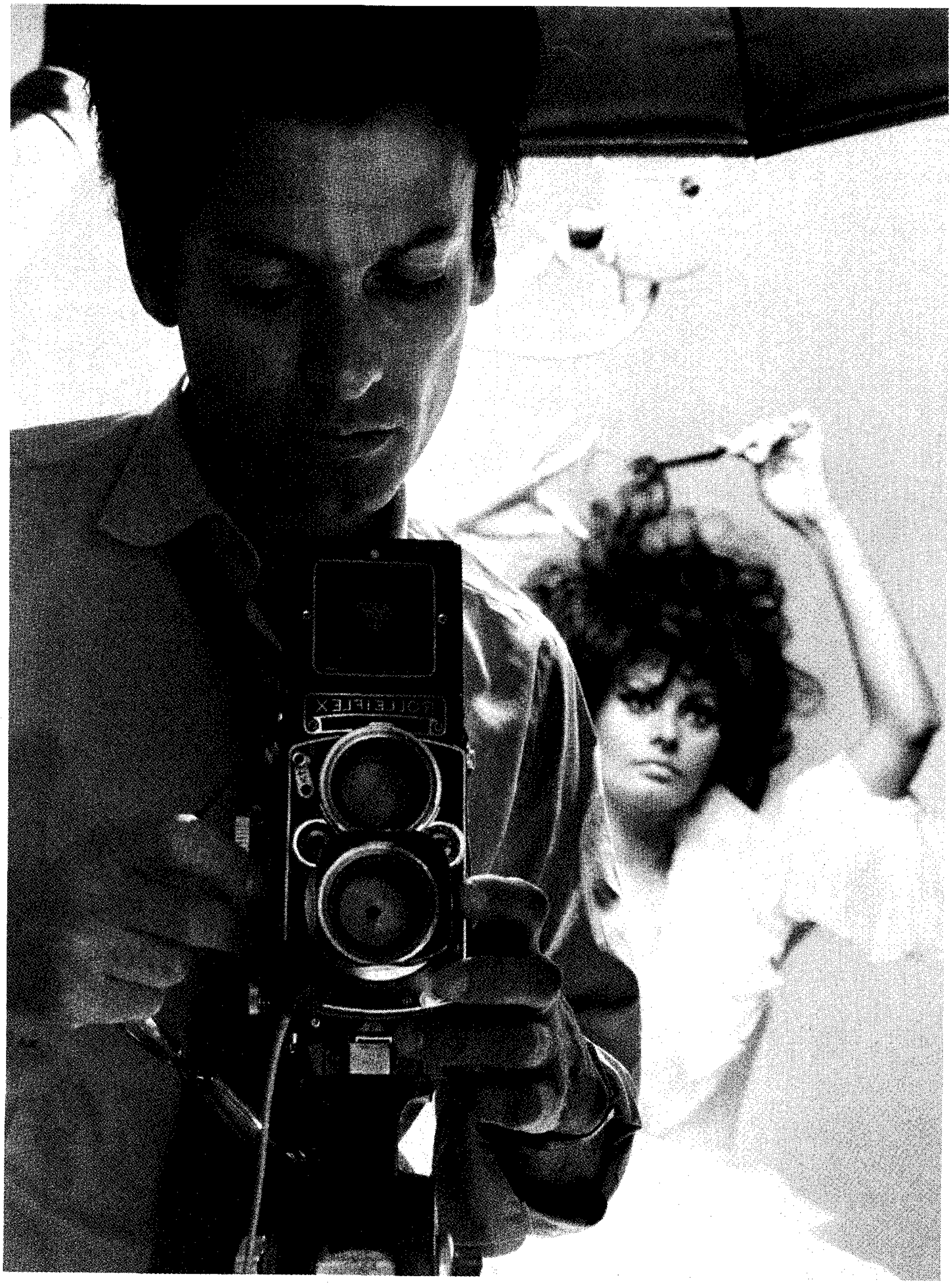
"*What*?" Jacobs asked.

"I'm kidding! I'm kidding!"

Jacobs had been nominated for the accessories and womenswear-designer-of-the-year awards, but he won neither. At his table, after the ceremony, he stayed on his BlackBerry, text-messaging Martone, while Victoria Beckham, Robert Duffy, the hip-hop star Lil' Kim, the comedian Amy Poehler, and their dates attempted to have a conversation. After an appetizer of tiny turnips was cleared away, Poehler got up to say hello to other people she knew, and when she returned she found that the entire table had evacuated, before the main course had even arrived. "Are they afraid of food?" she asked.

Jacobs said later that he and his celebrity entourage had gone to meet David Beckham at Nobu. "It's been *years* since I've wanted to go to the C.F.D.A. awards," he said. "I feel a bit obliged, and, again, when I go against what I feel and do what I'm obliged to do, I'm always unhappy." Victoria Beckham had given a little speech about Jacobs during the awards presentation, in which she remarked that, from season to season, Jacobs's collections tend to be "diametrically opposed, yet completely signature." It was perhaps the only element of the evening that pleased him.

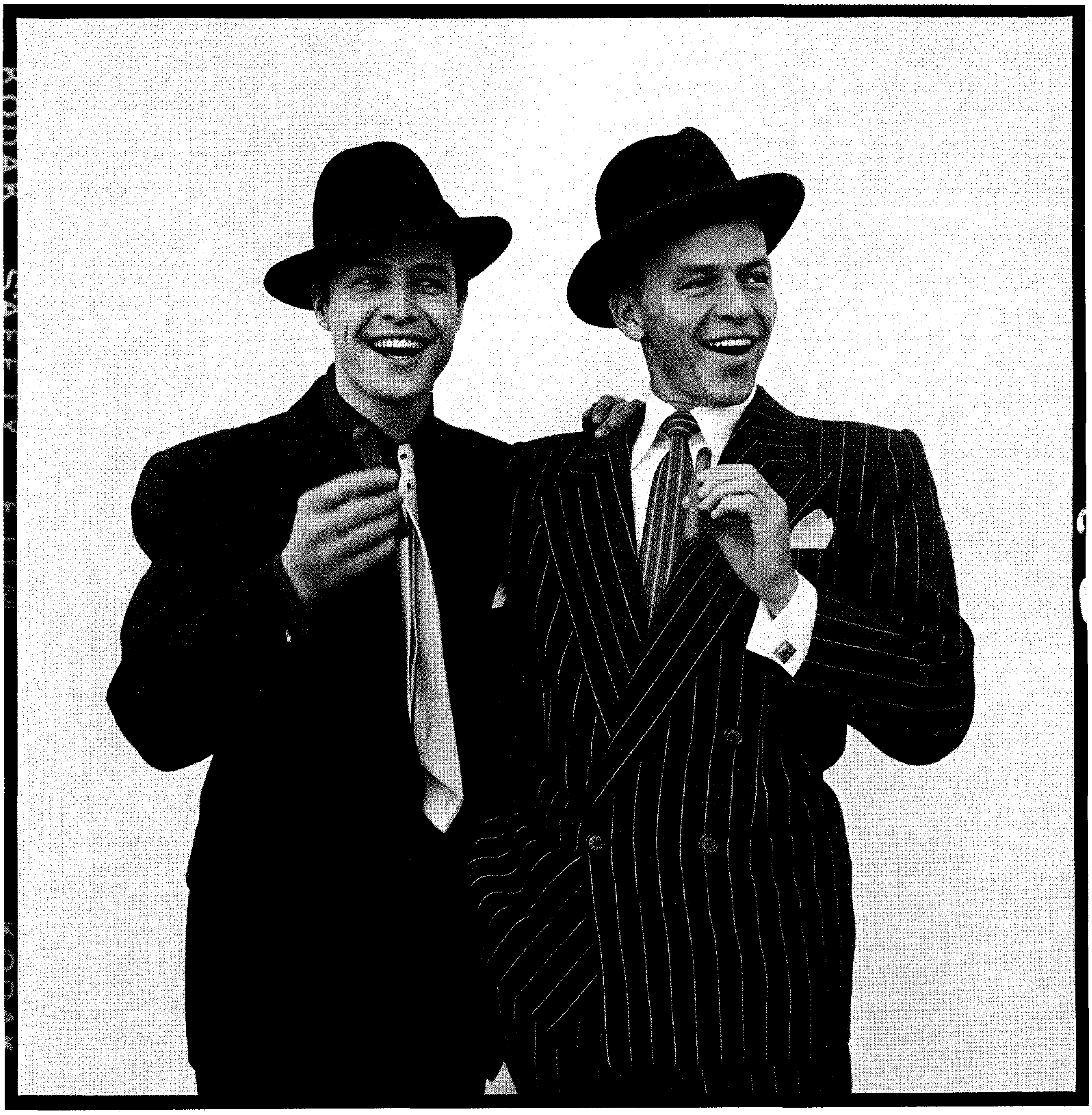
"I love frogs," he told me. "This sort of fairy-tale frog that became a prince, and the chameleon who changes colors with his environment. 'Zelig' is my favorite film. I understand that. I can hang out in a sports bar with a bunch of straight guys and say 'Go, Knicks' and I can run around in the art scene and I can also be at the Met ball and be Mr. Fashion Designer with Anna Wintour. I can go wherever I want; I can be whatever I choose." This, in the end, is Marc Jacobs's superpower: "I can change colors—for my own amusement and, perhaps, the entertainment of others." ♦



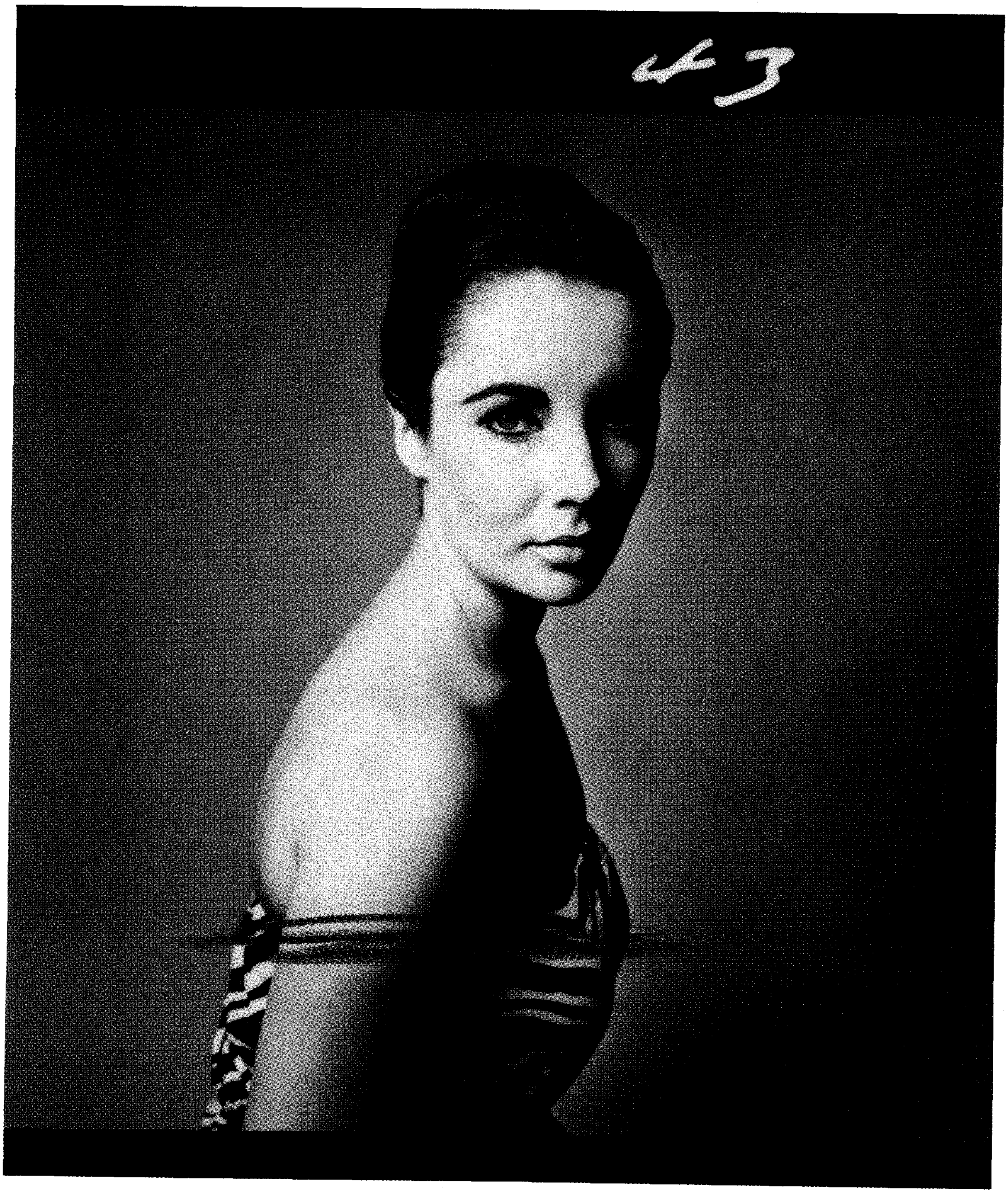
PORTFOLIO BY RICHARD AVEDON

SHOW PEOPLE

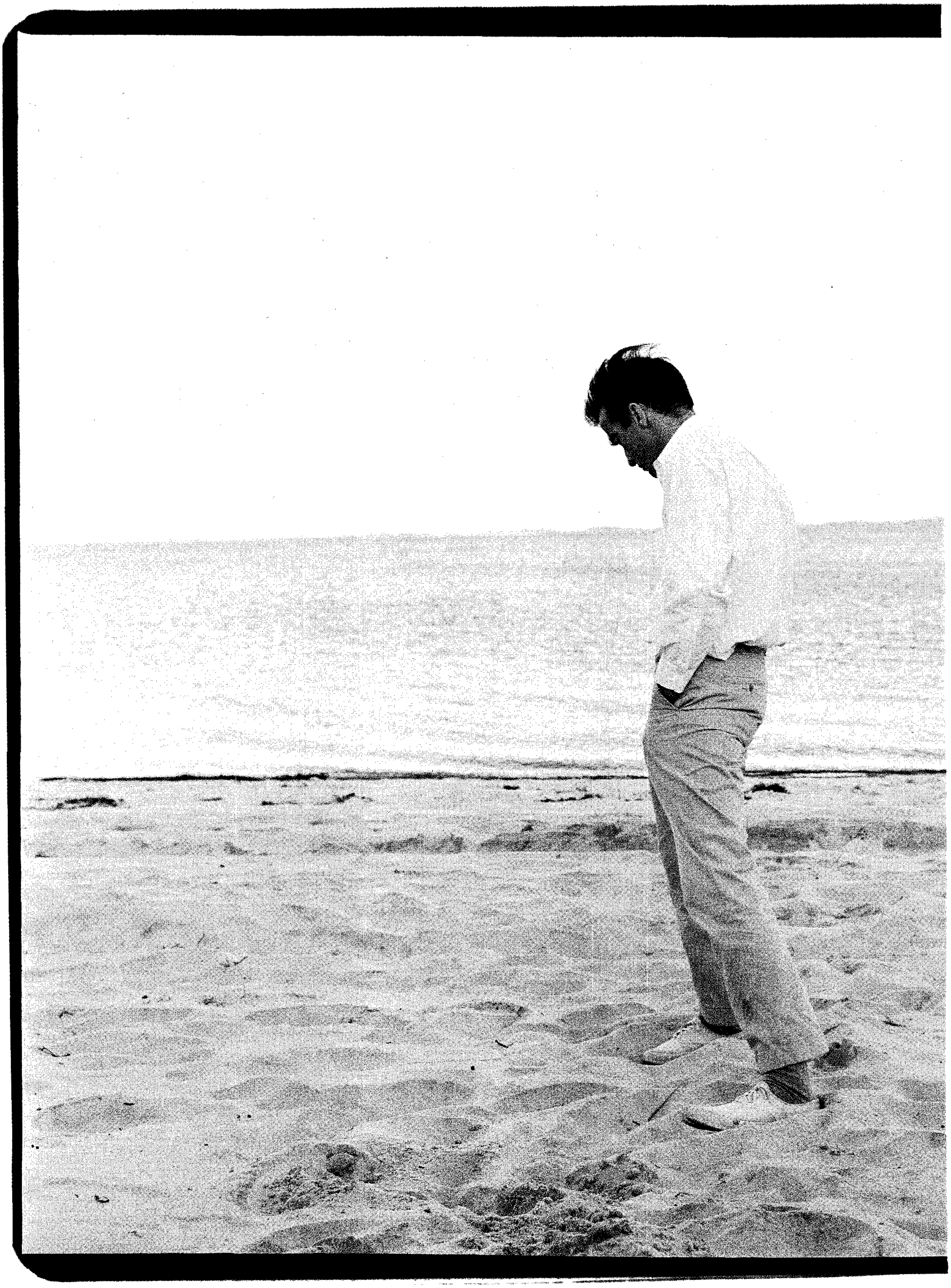
Richard Avedon had an enduring relationship with performers: he was portrayed by one—Fred Astaire—in the 1957 movie "Funny Face," and throughout his career they remained among his favorite subjects. The pictures on these pages, including that of Avedon with Sophia Loren in 1966 (above), are from a new collection of rarely seen work.

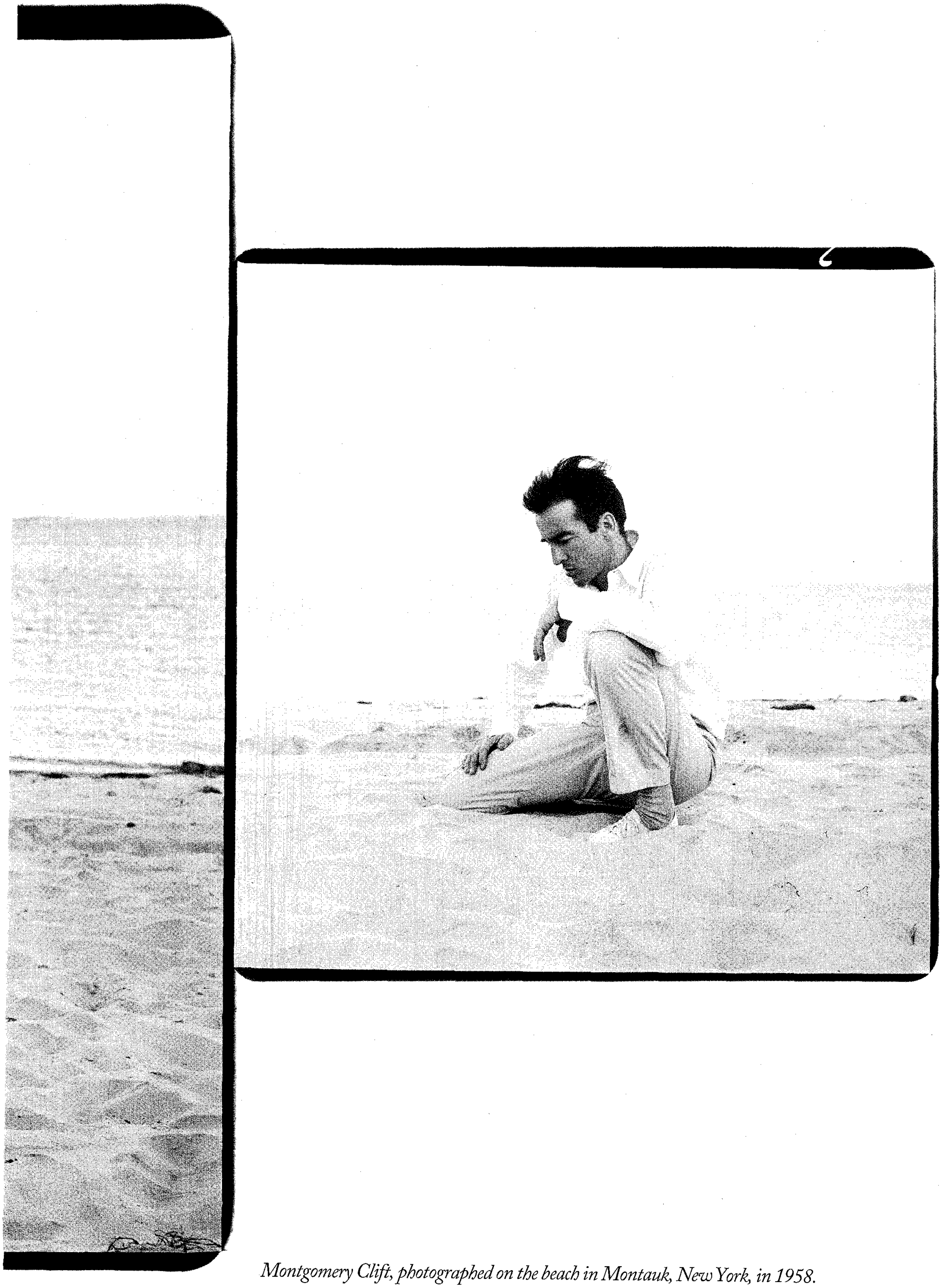


Marlon Brando and Frank Sinatra as Sky Masterson and Nathan Detroit on the set of "Guys and Dolls," Los Angeles, 1955.

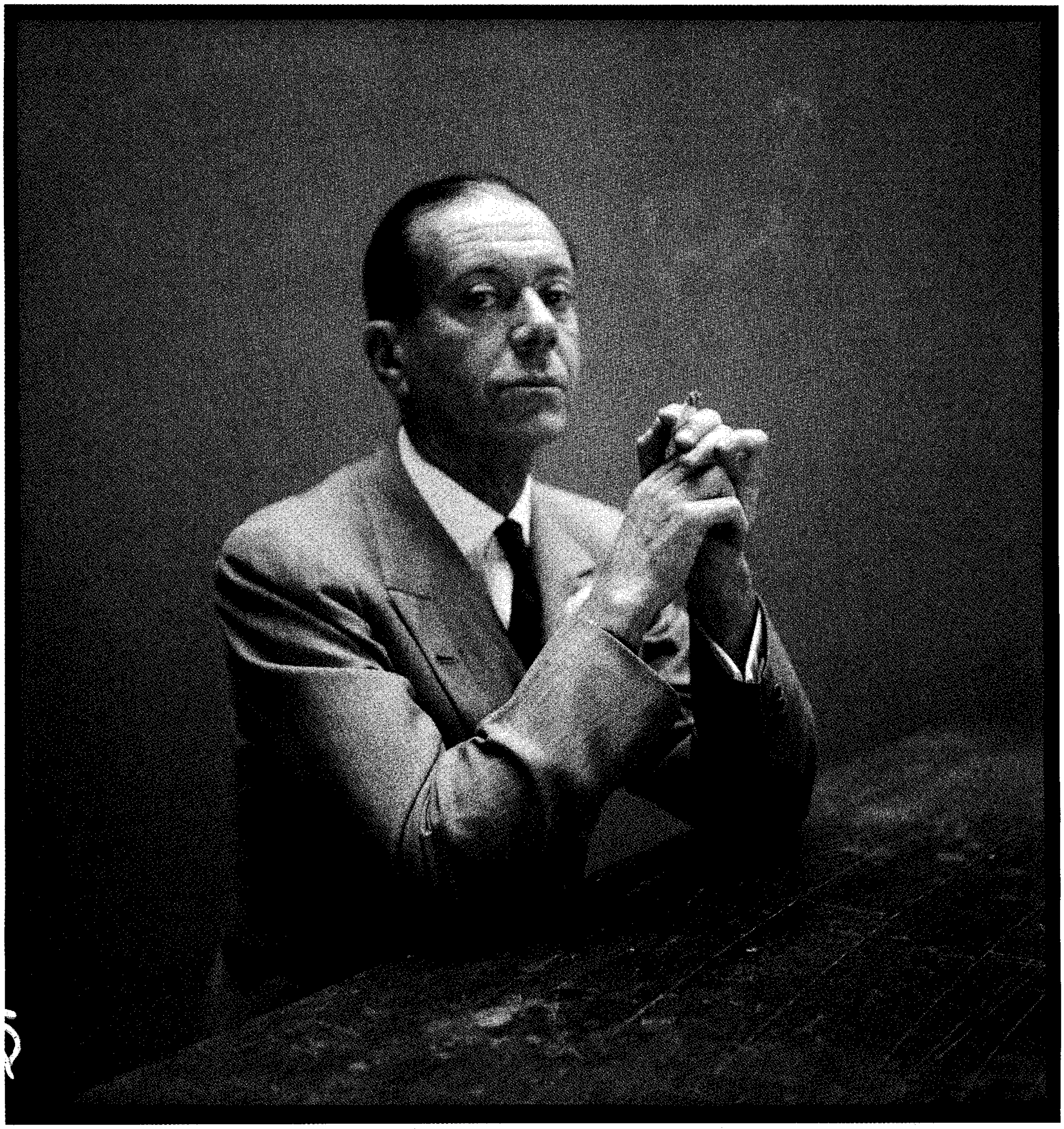


Elizabeth Taylor, photographed in New York City in 1958, the year she received an Oscar nomination for "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

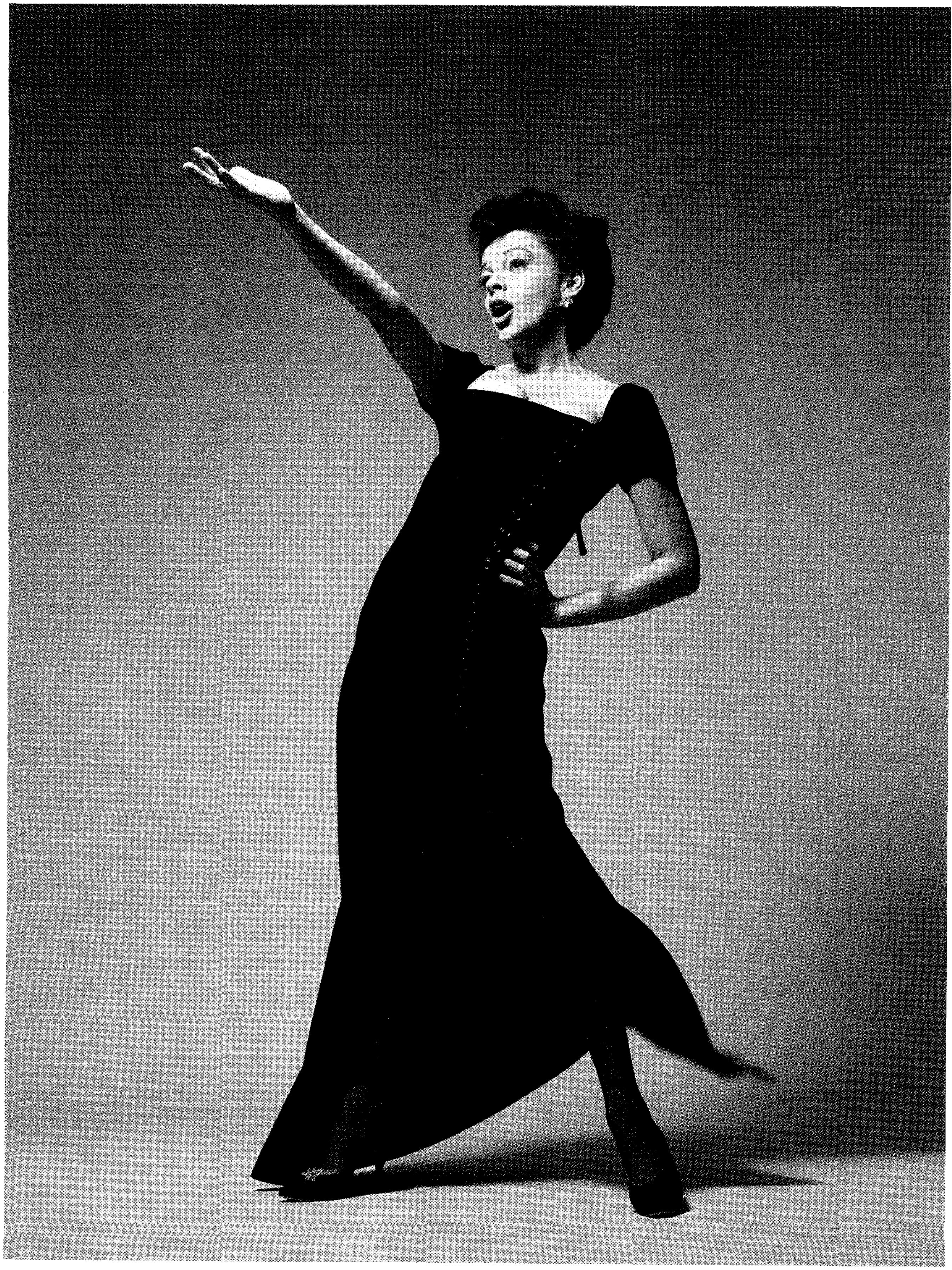




Montgomery Clift, photographed on the beach in Montauk, New York, in 1958.



Cole Porter, photographed for the magazine Theatre Arts, in New York City in 1950, two years after "Kiss Me, Kate."



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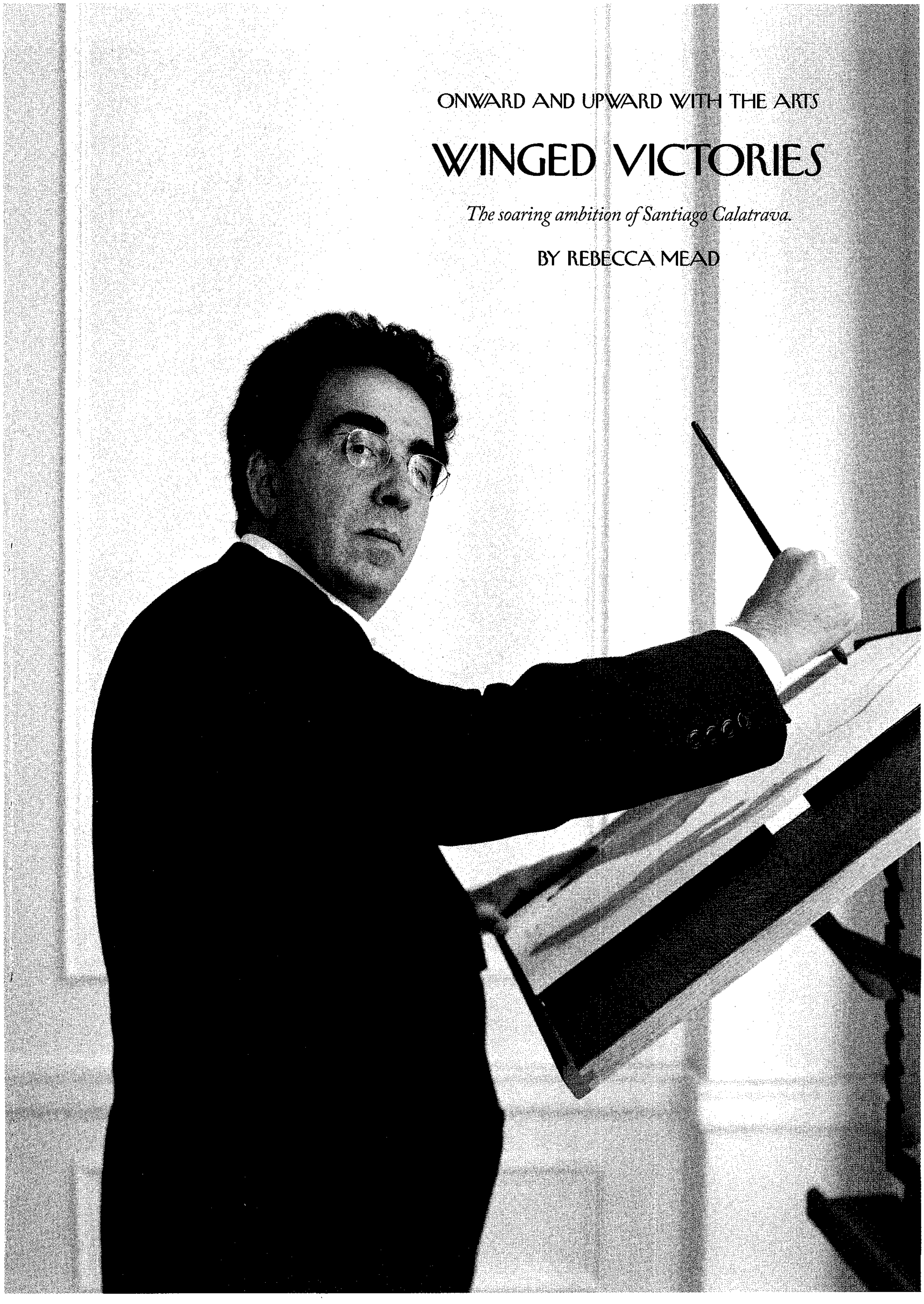
Judy Garland, in a dress by Norman Norell and jewelry by Harry Winston, photographed in New York City in 1963.

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

WINGED VICTORIES

The soaring ambition of Santiago Calatrava.

BY REBECCA MEAD



Calatrava does not work with a computer; each of his buildings begins with sketches in watercolor. Photograph by Ethan Levitas.

Santiago Calatrava, the Spanish architect, speaks six languages, and although his English is less than perfect, its wrinkles only heighten the allure of his pronouncements. "Though I love the arts with all my heart—paintings, sculpture, theatre, and music—and think they are among the biggest achievements we humans can do, I am really convinced that architecture is among the most important," he declared one evening last March, at a cocktail-hour gathering in the wood-panelled ballroom of the Harold Pratt House, the Park Avenue mansion that is home to the Council on Foreign Relations. Calatrava, who has a low voice and a professorial manner, was dressed in a dark suit and wore glasses with the narrowest of metal rims. He stood next to an overhead projector, upon which lay brushes, a box of watercolor paints, and two weights of paper that had been supplied in advance by an aide.

"You can penetrate architecture, you can enter into it," he continued. "This room is part of *ourselves* in this moment. I think it is important to build for people, and to deliver this message of hope: through good construction and a certain sense of progression, a better understanding of each other can be achieved. All those things, in modesty, are what I have tried to convey." Calatrava turned to the box of paints. "I thought it better to draw than to speak," he said, as he dipped a brush into a glass of water and began sketching a slender green leaf and a snail's shell, which were displayed on two screens flanking him.

The images drew appreciative chuckles from the audience: each shape could, with only a limited exercise of imagination, be seen expressed in the structure of the Chicago Spire, a building designed by Calatrava, which the event was intended to promote. At present little more than a construction site with an attractive street address—400 North Lake Shore Drive—the Chicago Spire is to be a silvery, faceted tower spiralling from the bank of Lake Michigan to a delicately tapered point, with Calatrava attending to the smallest ornamental details, including bronze door handles cast in the shape of leotard-clad dancers. Before Calatrava took the podium, the guests had the chance to listen to a sales representative for the building's twelve hundred luxury apartments—"From the observation deck you can see the curvature of the earth," she claimed, seductively if implausibly—and viewed digital renderings of the Spire's torqued, glittering form, which looked less like a place to live than like a drill bit from a tool kit produced by Cartier.

Calatrava, who, at fifty-seven, has thick, dark hair that is barely touched by silver, took a second sheet of paper. With a few brushstrokes, he sketched the tapering outline of his building as seen at some distance, added a strip of green to evoke Chicago's waterfront, a wash of blue to suggest the lake, and some brownish blocks to stand in for the rest of the city's skyline. The result looked like an illustration from a children's book—an effect that was enhanced when Calatrava put into the foreground a park bench and two seated figures gazing at the Spire. "What has finally been important to us is not so much the idea of the building as the idea of the persons watching the building, and also those inside living in harmony with the natural world," Calatrava said, as, with a flourish, he added the crowning, naïve touch: a distant bird in flight.

For Calatrava, who is one of the world's most successful architects, sketching with watercolors is an essential part of his creative process. He does not work with a computer or with drafting equipment; each of his buildings begins with a sheaf of paint-dappled pages. His archive in Switzerland includes more than a hundred thousand sketches; he has also had copies of them bound into handsome keepsake books for his clients, a beguilingly artisanal alternative to a PowerPoint presentation.

Calatrava typically paints images—a leaping figure, a charging bull, a disembodied eye, a skeletal hand—that at first seem to have nothing to do with buildings but, rather, suggest the contents of the sketchbook of an art student who has spent the afternoon at MOMA lingering over the Picassos. The relevance of such drawings becomes fully apparent in Calatrava's completed structures, which are instantly recognizable for their use of sculptural forms that draw upon motifs found in the natural world. A station for the airport at Lyon-Saint Exupéry has sand-colored concrete wings with black steel struts, raised aloft, as if the building were a bird of prey alighting on the ground with its latest capture. A transportation hub in Lisbon has dozens of uprushing white steel columns topped with a canopy of striated, faceted glass that evokes a forest of tropical palms. The first completed Calatrava skyscraper, the Turning Torso tower, in Malmö, Sweden, which is fifty-four stories high and twists through ninety degrees, was derived from a sculpture that Calatrava first made in 1985, and this, in turn, was prompted by his sketches of the human spine. (Similar studies lay behind 80 South Street, an apartment tower that Calatrava proposed in 2004 for downtown Manhattan, consisting of twelve glassy, cube-shaped town houses airily stacked one atop another, with apparent disregard for gravity. That project has stalled for lack of investors.) Calatrava's bridges, for which he initially earned his fame, often evoke the shapes of lithe human forms, bending or lunging with Olympian vigor. Though he does not like to describe his work as having been inspired by nature—he is fond of quoting Rodin, who said that inspiration does not exist—the connection has been made by the developers marketing his buildings. The sales slogan for the Chicago Spire is "Inspired by Nature, Imagined by Calatrava."

Calatrava has made sketching in public another signature move. In Dallas, where two Calatrava bridges are being built, he pulled out the watercolors after lunch at the home of Margaret McDermott, a local philanthropist who contributed two million dollars to the project. ("He reached into his briefcase and dipped a brush into his water glass," Mary McDermott Cook, McDermott's daughter, recalled of the occasion. "My mother said, 'Get him another glass of water!' ") In Liège, Belgium, Calatrava was one of seven contestants in an architectural competition to design a high-speed-train station. His rivals came in teams, armed with examples of their past work; Calatrava showed up alone, with his paintbrush, and won the commission. In January, 2004, while presenting his proposal for a new PATH transit hub for the World Trade Center site, Calatrava drew in chalk a child releasing a bird from her hands, thus conveying the genesis of the design, in which a pair of glass-and-steel canopies would arch over the sidewalks of lower Manhattan, like outstretched wings.

Calatrava has been trained both in architecture and in engineering, but he thinks of himself as an artist, and it is as such that he has been embraced by his most enthusiastic champions. Three years ago, the Metropolitan Museum presented a show of Calatrava's sculpture and architectural models; it was the largest exhibition the Met had ever devoted to a living architect. The show's curator, Gary Tinterow, says of Calatrava, "When he approaches a project, he begins to think about it in terms of form. Then he refines the form, as he adapts it to the function at hand." Joseph Seymour, the executive director of the Port Authority at the time Calatrava was selected for the PATH-station project, has said, "He's the da Vinci of our time."

"My personality is more the personality of a painter," Calatrava told me a few months ago, when I met him in his New York office. (He has lived in the city since 2005.) "I would like to be an artist who works in a very closed ambience," he continued. "In order to solve the kind of problems I have to solve, I have to work in myself, and with myself."

And yet Calatrava rarely finds seclusion. He shuttles constantly between New York, where he has a staff of about thirty-five, and Europe, where he has a staff of a hundred: half in Zurich and half in his home town of Valencia. Demands are made on his time by clients across the globe. In Tenerife, he has built a waterfront concert hall that looks like a shell topped with a ram's horn; in Buenos Aires, he has created a cable-strung footbridge that, spectacularly, pivots from its transverse position to a position parallel to the bank, to permit the passage of water traffic.

Calatrava is unafraid of the big emotional gesture. At the official groundbreaking of his PATH station, in 2005, he enlisted his daughter, Sofia, then age ten, to release over the site what were officially billed as a pair of doves, in order to insure the comprehension of his architectural conceit. (They were actually white homing pigeons, a more reliable bird for ceremonial purposes.) In comparison with the work of his architectural peers, Calatrava's buildings appeal more to the heart than to the head. For all their structural complexity, they do not enjoy the playful indeterminacy of Frank Gehry, the cerebral audacity of Rem Koolhaas, or the mathematical austerity of Zaha Hadid. But, at their best, his buildings inspire visceral awe rather than thoughtful appraisal, and deliver the uplifting impact of a cathedral, even when their purpose is merely to shelter commuters.

To generate this sense of transcendence is precisely Calatrava's intention. "To do simple things is very difficult," he says. In spite of the earnestness of his buildings, though, Calatrava is not without a personal capacity for irony. Having delivered his remarks at the sales event for the Chicago Spire, he noted, as he laid down his brush, "The most beautiful part of this is that the building is already under construction."

Calatrava does not always travel in a private jet, but there are times when the convenience offered by a Cessna of one's own outweighs all other considerations. Such an occasion presented itself on a wet April afternoon in Zurich, when Calatrava set off to show me one of his designs, the high-speed-train station in Liège, which is nearing completion.

As Calatrava hustled across the rainy tarmac of the airport and boarded a seven-seater provided by NetJets—an aviation time-share company—he did so with weary relief. That morning, he had flown in on Lufthansa's red-eye from Qatar, where he had been exploring a site for a proposed photography museum. He had intended to return a day earlier, but the Emir had requested that he stay on another night, and the comic indignities of commercial travel were fresh in his mind. He had made a rushed connection at dawn in Frankfurt, where a security agent insisted that he jettison a half-used bottle of cologne that was in violation of antiterrorism regulations. "I said, 'Look, it's almost empty,' but it made no difference," Calatrava recalled, shaking his head as he switched off his iPhone, placed it on the polished ledge at his elbow, and sank into the buttery taupe leather of his seat.

Calatrava began his career in Zurich, where he studied civil engineering; he was thirty-two when he won his first big competition, to design the Stadelhofen commuter station, an open, airy structure made of steel and concrete that on one side leans into the cleft of a hillside and on the other opens into a city square. More recently, he built a library for the University of Zurich's law school—an ovoid structure topped with a glass oculus—that fits snugly within the courtyard of the school's existing hundred-year-old building. A visitor standing inside the splendid skylit atrium will see no books or students; the workspaces are hidden behind five levels of pearwood-clad balconies, as if the library were a beehive in which all honey-producing activity had been cunningly concealed. The oculus is equipped with a brise-soleil that silently opens and closes according to the available daylight, and the library is so popular that even students not enrolled in the law school have taken to working there.

Calatrava has long been interested in incorporating movement into his architecture; his Ph.D. thesis was concerned with the foldability of three-dimensional structures. Movement, he argues, is an essential part of the natural world and of human life, and is profoundly related to our experience of time. "Even if people want to do monuments that are timeless, like the pyramids of Egypt—well, they are moving," he says. "We don't see that, because they move very slowly, but they are now shorter than when they were built. The stones are falling down. Everything in our universe moves." His earliest studies for moving buildings begin in the model shop of his office in Zurich. When I visited, a model-maker was working on a piece that was about seven feet tall and resembled a stack of thirty-odd pizza boxes, like the detritus of a frat party. At the flip of a switch, the sides of the stack undulated woozily, as if viewed through the eyes of a drunken reveller.

Calatrava's office is in a smart residential district in Zurich, in the former home of a well-to-do brewer; the engineers who help solve the structural challenges of his inspirations occupy what were probably once the bedrooms, while the architects who convert his sketches into formal plans are stationed in a

SHARON ACADEMY
KOREN

"Good night, son—sweet dreams and a great sleep experience."

ground-floor room with an enormous plate-glass window that overlooks an unadorned green lawn edged with a loggia. Calatrava lives in a handsome villa a few steps from the shore of Lake Zurich. Its reception rooms are largely dedicated to displaying his sculpture, although, in a concession to the demands of domestic life, Calatrava has also incorporated cube-shaped cantilevered cabinets that seem to float inches from the walls, to serve as storage for glassware handblown in Murano.

"Zurich is for me a place to retire," Calatrava told me in his studio, on the top floor of his house, where he paints amid the treetops while listening to classical music. "Another architect might have a very busy practice in New York, and have a studio in the country where he goes for a week from time to time to concentrate. My life here is a bit like that." (Actually, he recently bought a country house outside New York as well.) Calatrava thinks of himself as a man of modest tastes, and is pleased that his suits, handmade for him in France, still fit him ten years after their manufacture. "Believe me, my home in Zurich—it could also be much smaller, and the way I live is not very different from someone who lives in a one-room apartment," he told me. "I need a good shower in the morning, and I need a good bed to sleep in—that is all." He did admit, though, that one of the villa's charms is its proximity to Saint Moritz, where he has been skiing for thirty years.

Thirty-two years ago, while studying engineering in Zurich and living in an actual one-bedroom apartment, Calatrava met his wife, the former Robertina Marangoni, who grew up in Sweden, where her father was a businessman, and who was studying law in Switzerland. (The Calatravas speak to each other principally in German, his fifth language and her second.) Tina, who runs the Calatrava business, supported her husband throughout his education and in the early years of his practice, before it turned into a lucrative occupation. "I was very fortunate to marry my wife," Calatrava says. "I could not get a better one. She has been working very diligently, protecting me."

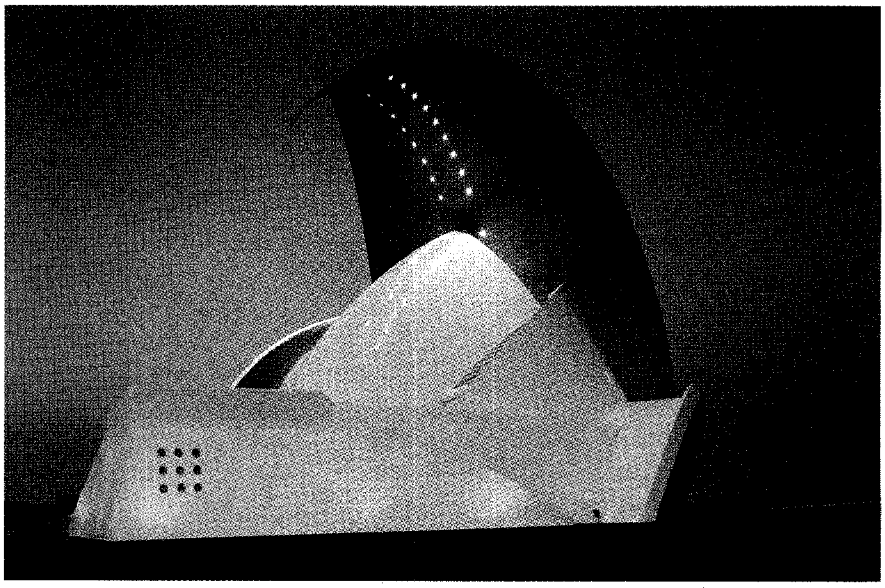
"I helped from the beginning, going to the post office and paying bills," says Robertina, who raised the couple's four children in Zurich and Paris while her husband consolidated his practice. (Rafael, twenty-nine, is a lawyer in Valencia; Gabriel, twenty-five, is studying civil engineering at Columbia University, where the Calatravas have endowed a chair; Micael, twenty-four, will attend Columbia's business school in the fall; Sofia, fourteen, attends the Lycée Français in New York.) Tina is Calatrava's closest professional and personal adviser. "I left my friends behind me in Europe, and the same with Santiago," she says. "Perhaps we are strange." Her husband, she says, "is a hard worker. To be as good as he is, you have to be a hard worker. He gets up at four in the morning, because he has to work with Europe. He has no hobbies, like playing golf. He works the whole day, in a very concentrated way."

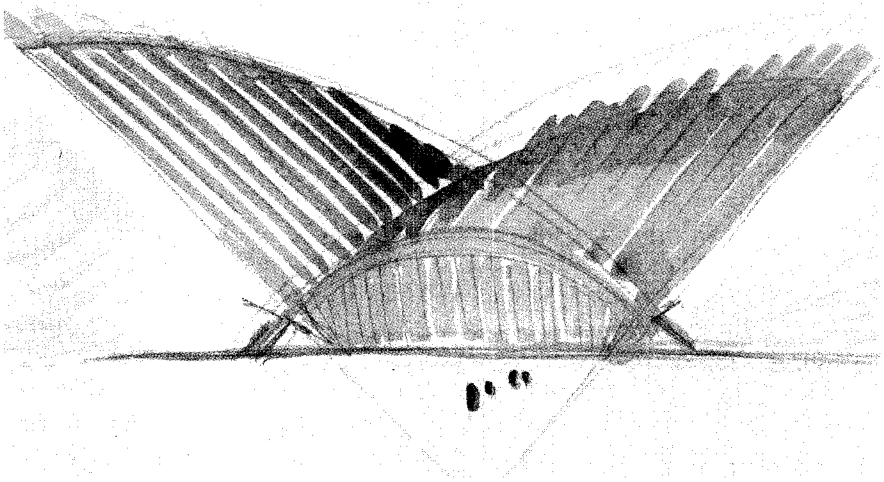
The Calatrava family is extremely close-knit, occupying a compound of three adjacent town houses on Park Avenue. One house contains the office, which is equipped with glass-and-cast-bronze desks and tables of Calatrava's design, and the same leaping-dancer door handles that he is providing for the Chicago Spire. Another of the houses is divided into sleek, almost identical bachelor pads for the Calatrava sons, designed by Gabriel Calatrava without oversight by Calatrava senior. The third town house is the main family home, and has been renovated to Calatrava's specifications, with ample room to display his art works on the lower level and, according to his wife, inadequate closet space upstairs. "When it comes to designing interior spaces, he's a guy," Gabriel Calatrava says.

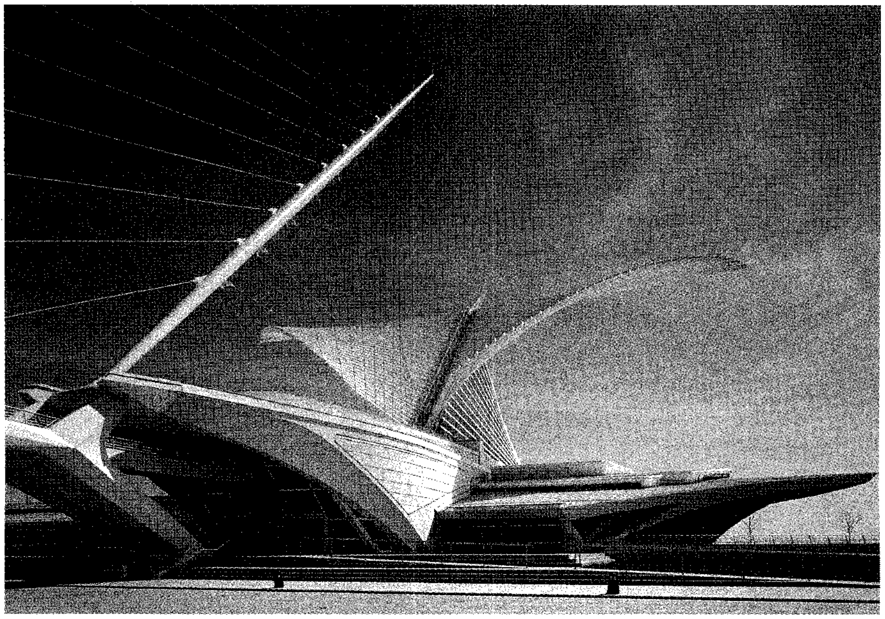
The family spends summers in Zurich, which the rest of the year also serves as a convenient central location for Calatrava's various European projects, such as the train station in Liège. After Calatrava's private jet landed in Belgium, he headed off to meet Vincent Bourlard, the managing director of Euro-Liège TGV, a subsidiary of the Belgian national railway company that has overseen the commission and creation of the station, which has been under development for the past eleven years. Calatrava's station is expected to help transform Liège, a former mining town, by turning it into the natural way station between Brussels, in the west, and Cologne, in the east, joining Liège to the growing network of high-speed trains all over Europe.

A station, Calatrava believes, should be a grand gateway to a city, like the Gothic stone gates of his native Valencia, built in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to impress upon the rest of Europe the city's status as a trading power. "If you conceive these buildings with a purely functionalistic point of view, they easily become obsolete," he told me. "In Zurich, they made a kind of shopping mall in front of the main station. Nobody wants to shop there. The place that, twenty years ago, everyone thought was very beautiful, today everybody says is a place where they never want to go. People don't even want to traverse through, and in the night it is insecure, because there is no grandeur. They just wanted to take advantage of the poor fellow whose train arrives in the city to go to his job—to sell him a piece of bread, or a tomato, or a juice, or a beer." Calatrava has built more than ten stations so far in his career. "You go into Grand Central and you immediately understand that this has been done for you: it is a gift to everyone, it is a gift to the city," he told me. "I understand the problem of the person who cannot eat because he has no money; I understand how tragic is the person who is homeless. Because of that, I like doing stations, because they are the home of everybody, and because you are providing a beautiful moment in the life of people who work so hard. I am not a food producer; I am not a doctor; I am an architect, and I use my work for a sense of philanthropy, and not for any glory. This is a Stoic concept: to stay in the middle, which permits you to be free from the ambitions of the high, and permits you, through your liberty, to deliver something to those who don't have anything."

Calatrava arrived in Liège as evening was falling, and so, before going to observe the progress that had been made on his station since the last time he was there, a few weeks earlier, he and Bourlard went straight to dinner at a contemporary Italian restaurant set in a pretty courtyard garden. "I adore Calatrava," Bourlard said emphatically, as he ordered the first bottle of wine. "I went to New York to see the exhibition at the Met, and I saw a big banner that read, 'Van Gogh, Calatrava.' I said, 'Who is

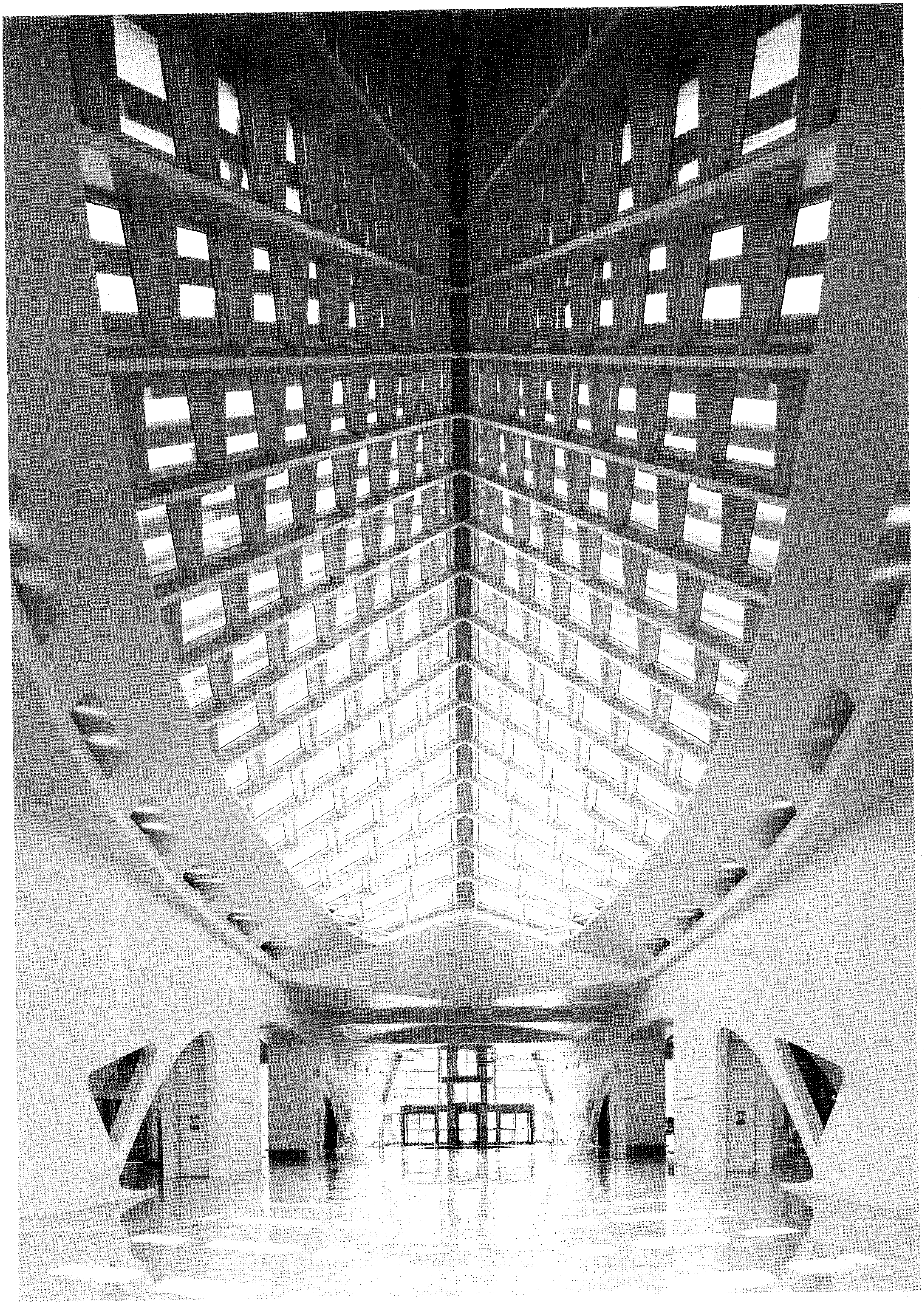






From top: the Auditorio de Tenerife, a concert hall; an early watercolor sketch of the proposed train station for the World Trade Center site; the addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum; and, opposite, the addition's interior. Photographs by Robert Polidori.

SKETCH: COURTESY SANTIAGO CALATRAVA

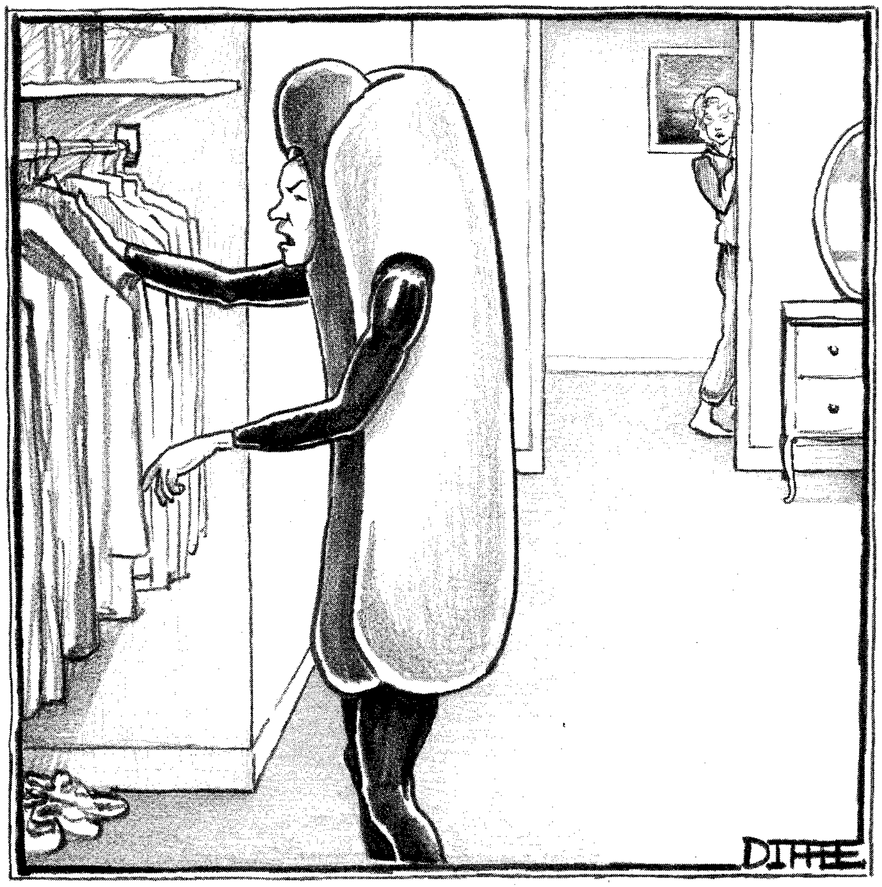


this van Gogh?' " As dinner was served, Bourlard, who had a shock of white hair and wore his glasses perched on the end of his nose, as if he were perpetually ready to examine a blueprint, recalled Calatrava's original presentation before the jury that was established to select an architect. "My former professor of philosophy at the university was on the jury, and he said something terrible," Bourlard told me. "Close your ears, Santiago. He said, 'He's half a genius, but I only ask myself whether his victims will survive him.' "

Calatrava responded, genially, "But, look, he's still alive."

At about ten-thirty, Bourlard said, "Now let's go and see the station!" Calatrava, who has never learned to drive, climbed into a waiting car, and a few minutes later it pulled up in front of an enormous steel structure. Like most of Calatrava's buildings, the station has been painted white, a color that he favors in part because it evokes the whitewashed buildings found in his native Mediterranean region, and also because white was adopted by northern-European modernists in the twentieth century. Open to the city on both sides, the station in Liège was covered with an expansive roof, now only half glazed, that undulated like a single, irresistible wave, about to drench the surrounding streets.

The curve of the roof mimicked the curve of the hill against which the station is set, and Calatrava explained to me that he wanted to connect the upper part of the city—where there is a park, and also apartment buildings and houses—with the lower part, which lies in front of the station and leads down to the Meuse River, a few blocks to the south. At one point, early in the station's planning, Euro-Liège had considered building a canal in order to link the station with the river—a vaporetto service for commuters, like that in Venice, was also proposed—but the logistics proved impossible. Instead, Calatrava mapped out an avenue leading to the river, in a space now filled with narrow houses and disused warehouses. Eventually, there will be plantings and a reflecting pool—Calatrava loves the doubling effect created by reflecting pools—but at the time of our visit all that lay in front of the station was a muddy forecourt, across which Calatrava picked his way in tooled-leather shoes.



"Honey, have you seen my onions?"

Bourlard, who had loosened his tie and was smoking a cigarillo, entered the lower level of the station and led the way beneath the platforms, while his architect hung back in modesty. "I'm going to show you the most beautiful parking lot in the whole of Western Europe," Bourlard said, striding into the bowels of the station, underneath the driveway that connected the passenger concourse to the hillside. It was, indeed, a remarkable space in which to deposit a car, with sixty-five thousand square feet divided by concrete ribs that each resembled a modified L, rather like the angle of a wire coat hanger's shoulder. (This is one of Calatrava's favored forms, and is an abstraction of the space between an extended thumb and index finger, derived from his watercolor studies of the human hand.) Next, Bourlard walked to the foot of a staircase leading to the platform level. "Here's the nave of the cathedral," he said, gesturing toward the vaulted roof. Even in the murk of a construction site by night, the ecclesiastical metaphor was deserved, with the stairs that ascended under Calatrava's ribbed roof evoking a vision of Jacob's ladder while simultaneously suggesting the experience of Jonah after ingestion by the whale.

Calatrava was born just outside Valencia, the unplanned but much cherished youngest of four children. (His name is that of a twelfth-century order of knights.) His father, like his grandfather, had a business exporting fruits and vegetables to countries in northern Europe, and, as a child, Calatrava divided his time between his parents' home and that of a childless aunt and uncle, who owned a farm. "My father was very much inclined to art, and I remember being very small and travelling with him to Madrid to see the Prado," Calatrava says. "Through my father I learned the fact that people can be very clever and do very good business, but being an artist is a superior thing."

Calatrava's father died when he was thirteen, and the family business was taken over by an older brother, while the young Santiago continued his education.

In 1968, he went to Paris to attend the École des Beaux-Arts, only to find that it was shuttered, owing to student unrest. "I spent the best summer of my life in Paris," Calatrava says. "When you are sixteen years old, nothing is disappointing." He returned to Valencia in the fall to study art, but within a year he had switched to architecture. "I remember being in a shop buying brushes, and there was a booklet there on Le Corbusier," he says. "It convinced me that you could do beautiful things with architecture. Le Corbusier was also a painter, and he had done beautiful sculptures, so this changed my orientation a bit." Calatrava cites Le Corbusier as an important influence on his work, particularly the swoopy chapel that the Swiss-born architect designed for Ronchamp, in France.

Another important influence, he says, was the Gothic architecture of Valencia, especially the city's Silk Exchange, whose trading hall has eight intricately twisting columns ascending to a ribbed, vaulted ceiling, like the Chicago Spire reflected in a hall of mirrors. Calatrava is fond of comparing himself to the forgotten artisans who erected the Silk Exchange. " 'Architect' comes from the Greek, and means 'the one who commands the workers,' " he says. "The name of the architect gets forgotten. I learned this very early: that the day before the opening you are responsible for everything, and the day after the opening you are nobody. That is part of the job: you have to take your bag and your tools and go and build something else."

Today's top architects, including Calatrava, are hardly anonymous: the real-estate trade press in New York refers to the prospective PATH terminal at the World Trade Center as "Calatrava Station." But the well-documented Bilbao effect, in which a city in decline is revivified by the construction of an architecturally significant museum or other public building, assumes a principle that Calatrava professes to disdain. "*I* am not a brand. *This* is a brand," he told me one day, pointing to his watch, a Patek Philippe. (It was the "Calatrava" model, first manufactured in 1932. Calatrava owns three of them, all gifts from his children.) Although his designs might strike some as flashy, he insists that the sites on which he is asked to build—often marginal, formerly industrial districts—demand forceful architectural statements. "In Liège, there is still prostitution at night in that corner of the city, and drugs," he said. "My station in Lisbon is in the old oil refinery. When you work in those places, you have to do very strong gestures. If you make a shy building, no one will go there."

Still, Calatrava's reliable delivery of structures that are anything but shy has given his clients exceptional marketing tools. In the case of his most significant completed project in North America, an addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum, this is exactly what the client sought. "We were looking for something fairly dramatic," Russell Bowman, the museum's former director, explained to me. "We were looking for a building that provided an architectural identity for us." Hitherto, the museum's architectural identity had been provided by Eero Saarinen, who, in 1957, completed a sand-colored concrete block with deeply recessed windows, cantilevered over the banks of Lake Michigan. The Saarinen building, to which an extension was added in the nineteen-seventies, is austere, imposing, and fortresslike. (It also serves as the city's war memorial.) Calatrava's extension, by contrast, is a delight to the eye: a white vaulted pavilion on the water's edge, its ribbed steel-and-glass roof equipped with a massive pair of wings that, weather permitting, stretch, when the museum is open, to the span of a Boeing 747, and fold closed at night. "When it was under construction, we used to joke about its being like the volcano at the Mirage in Las Vegas—that we would have to open and lower the wings at certain times so that people could see it," Bowman told me. That has proved to be the case: in response to popular demand, the wings flap once a day, at noon. Seen from different angles and in different states of openness, the pavilion can look like a ship riding a wave, like a bird in flight, or very like a whale.

"Calatrava understands the relevance of destination architecture," the museum's current director, Daniel Keegan, explained to me over lunch in the Café Calatrava, a ground-floor restaurant in the prow of the pavilion, which, a couple of years ago, was renamed in the architect's honor. ("We called to ask him if we could use his name," Elysia Borowy-Reeder, the senior director of communications, told me. "He said sure. I think he thought it had always been called the Café Calatrava.") The museum, Keegan explained, competes for visitors with other entertainment options, such as theme parks, and the Calatrava pavilion, which charges no entry fee, serves as a lure for the museum's holdings, which include impressive collections of twentieth-century American art. "If we fail to be competitive around the experience, it doesn't really matter what we have," Keegan said. The experience, as orchestrated by Calatrava, includes an underground heated parking lot with arched ribs and skylights which is known in house as the Taj Garage. There is also a store, equipped with handsome, Calatrava-designed cabinetry, where visitors can buy jigsaw puzzles, mugs, book bags, lapel pins, and disks of chocolate, all bearing an image of the pavilion. In a merchandising opportunity not available to institutions with more soberly conceived facilities, the store also offers a flip book that shows the building's wings opening and shutting.

The construction of the pavilion, which was begun in 1997 and completed in 2001, was not without complications. The wings were supposed to be fashioned from a lightweight carbon fibre. When they proved too costly to fabricate, Calatrava had them made in lightweight steel by a company in Spain. They were flown to the States in two giant cargo planes, with less than a month for installation before the building's ceremonial opening. The switch in materials came at some aesthetic cost: the carbon-fibre wings would have withstood winds of up to forty miles an hour, while the steel wings retract automatically when gusts reach twenty-four miles an hour, a not infrequent occurrence on the banks of Lake Michigan. When I visited, one mildly breezy day in June, the wings folded up at eleven-thirty in the morning, ninety minutes after opening, and remained closed throughout the very pleasant afternoon.

Not long ago, Tina Calatrava re-

"I'm not losing my memory. I'm living in the now."

• •

quested, and received, a letter from the museum stating that the performance of the wings had met expectations, in order to respond to rumors that the building is mechanically less than perfect. (The museum's director of facilities, Charles Loomis, told me that the wings have worked flawlessly, though general maintenance of the building was higher than would have been the case in a more conventional structure. When the roof needs cleaning, window washers must rappel across it, like a SWAT team making an entry to a building besieged by terrorists; and there is one employee whose sole responsibility is to repaint the building, inside and out, with Trinity Bone, Calatrava's preferred shade of white.) Other critics have suggested that, whatever the quality of the engineering, Calatrava's sculptural pavilion is overblown kitsch. "Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, but buildings do not have to move, at least not in the literal and often costly Calatrava manner," Martin Filler wrote, in a survey of Calatrava's work that first appeared in *The New York Review of Books*.

The building was certainly costly: the final tally, including landscaping, was a hundred and thirty million dollars, all of it raised by Milwaukee's philanthropic community. The museum's administrators do not blame Calatrava for the expense of their acquisition, pointing out that his design was so successful as a fund-raising tool that the original plans for a much more modest extension were expanded as additional money became available. "Certainly, the form of the building was dramatic, but that was what we wanted, and that was what we got," Russell Bowman says. Like other Calatrava clients, he speaks of the architect in the kind of language that might be employed by a seducée happily disoriented after an encounter with a lover of legendary accomplishment. "He took us to levels that we never imagined," Bowman told me. "The effect of the building in Milwaukee has been to reach levels that we could only have dreamed of."

When Calatrava first unveiled his design for the World Trade Center station, in 2003, it was heralded as a symbolic statement perfectly in keeping with the tenor of the times. The building was equipped with a pair of moving wings and a mechanized roof that could be opened to the air every year on September 11th, in a symbolic gesture that recalls the city's vulnerability as well as its resilience. (It could also open at other times, for ventilation purposes.) "Should we preëmptively landmark this?" Robert Tierney, the chairman of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, said at the ceremony.

"The Port Authority was not known for creating fabulous buildings," says Daniel Libeskind, the architect who created the master plan for the new World Trade Center, and whose concept for a "wedge of light"—a public space upon which sunlight would fall every September 11th—was preserved in the positioning of the station. "What is very moving about the design is that it was not just another station," Libeskind says. "It reinforced the idea of the master plan that the whole site should be special."

Calatrava speaks of his client with courtly deference, dwelling on the Port Authority's more inspired projects—the construction of the George Washington Bridge or the Holland Tunnel—rather than on its less impressive contributions to civic architecture, such as the Port Authority Bus Terminal. "When I see the George Washington Bridge, I get tears in my eyes," he told me. His design, Calatrava says, embodies the Port Authority's contribution to the city, and memorializes its loss on September 11th, when eighty-five of its employees perished. "If you are a gardener, you will do it with flowers; but they are builders and engineers, and they would like to build something that not only serves the people but also carries the memory of those who died," he says.

When we met in Zurich, in April, Calatrava compared the effect provided by his station's opening roof to that delivered by the Pantheon. "People go there just to see a bit of the sky of Rome, but, with this opening, it is a universal thing," he told me. Another inspiration was the Hagia Sophia, with its breathtaking, spacious interior, reached by moving through a sequence of smaller spaces. It is no accident that a station might evoke the atmosphere of a temple, Calatrava says. "The word 'religion' comes from the Latin *religare*, meaning 'creating links,' " he explained. "Physically, what a station does is create links with the rest of the world, as do bridges. Look at the George Washington Bridge in the middle of the landscape: it is like a priest opening his hands."

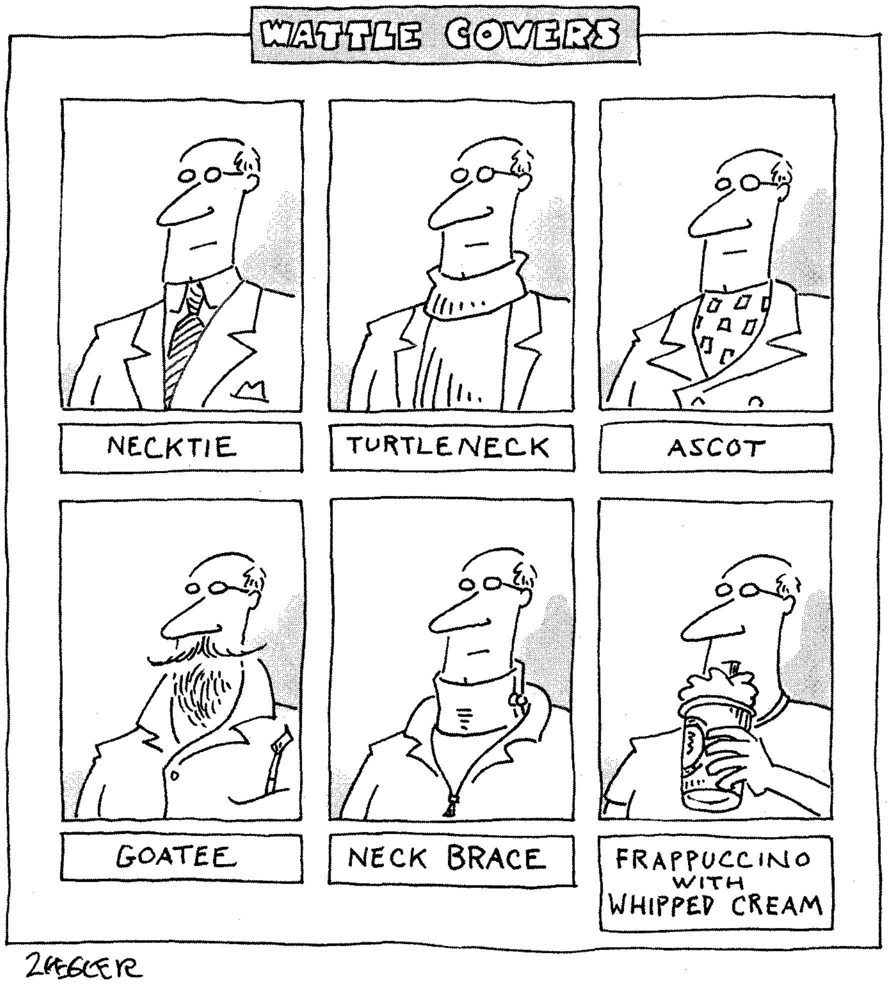
Although the PATH station's sculptural form at street level has been its strongest selling point, the station will not, thanks to the surrounding skyscrapers, be visible as an object in the same way that the Milwaukee Art Museum, or many of Calatrava's other structures, is visible. The popular emphasis on the exterior sculptural qualities of the station is misplaced, Calatrava told me, though he says that he can understand why his over-all plan for the station has been less well comprehended. "It's like music," he explained. "People get captured by the melody or by the rhythm, but they don't go into the essence of the problem. People will whistle the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven. But that is not Beethoven."

Calatrava's commitment to the artistic and symbolic statement expressed in the station has, at times, been at odds with the more prosaic needs of his client. "Santiago would be looking for an art form, and we would be looking for services for commuters, and also a source of revenue," says Joseph Seymour, the former Port Authority head, who retired in November, 2004. Ken Ringler, the executive director of the Port Authority from 2004 until 2007, says, "My view was always, if we have to keep within budget, don't go and tell Santiago what to do; tell Santiago what is the problem. If you tell him what to do, it will conflict with his artistic desires; but he's a great problem-solver." One problem that even Calatrava was unable to solve to his satisfaction was a conflict with the planners for the memorial at the World Trade Center site, across the street from the station. When it emerged that Calatrava's glass-bottomed reflecting pool, through which light was to have fallen upon the commuters below, trespassed the area reserved for the memorial, he was obliged to delete the pool from his blueprint. "I think it is absurd, but it is not my job to educate people," he told me. Some of the sublimity of his design would be lost, but, he said, "I think it is like when you are doing a painting. You see some Rembrandt paintings that have unfinished parts."

This summer, it became clear that Calatrava's station might never achieve its Rembrandtesque fullness. At the end of June, Chris Ward, the recently appointed head of the Port Authority, issued an unvarnished progress report on the entire World Trade Center site, in which he acknowledged that the station, rather than becoming operational in 2009, as originally projected, would not be completed until much later. Nor, he announced, would the building's wings move. "This is a tough choice, but it's the right choice," Ward said. Instead, Calatrava had substituted a less costly mechanism, whereby a strip of glass panels bisecting the roof could open up on September 11th or on other occasions. "Making this decision helps preserve the over-all iconic nature of Calatrava's winged design," Ward explained. In an effort to keep the cost of the project below two and a half billion dollars, changes to the underground mezzanine were being evaluated, including a dimunition of public space.

Calatrava coöperated with the Port Authority in laying the groundwork for this sobering announcement, and in mid-August, as his staff was preparing to propose further cost-cutting strategems to the Port Authority, he told me, "In terms of the users, the project is better now than it was before." But in April, as we flew from Liège to Valencia, he had argued that it was wrongheaded to believe that economic belt-tightening calls for a less extravagant architectural statement. "It's like someone says, 'I have to save, I must sell my car'—and then you can't go anywhere," he said.

"Because this station has a part that is symbolic, people think that is the station, but that is *not* the station," he continued. "That is just the sign to show people where it is on the street." The real station, he said, was what lay below street level: the vast mezzanine unobstructed by columns, and lit by natural light filtered from above, bestowing upon the traveller all the grandeur and sense of occasion offered by the great room of Grand Central, with its celestial roof and shafts of sunlight. "They should not build the iconic part," he in-



sisted, as we flew southward above French clouds. "They should wait another generation, and they should build that which the other generation cannot build. The next generation can build the iconic part, but the platforms, the services, the generous spaces, the sense of arrival—these things they will never be able to move."

The form that the station eventually takes will be an expression of the city's priorities, Calatrava told me, and he did not seem convinced that New York would have the self-confidence necessary to hold fast to its vision, and his. "If people say it has to be a small station—well, it's their station, it's not my station," he said. "If they want to have an ordinary underground station and a shopping mall, they will have it. They will get the full measure of their personality. I do not say that New York will get the station it deserves, but it will get the station it wants."

The fullest articulation of Calatrava's vision can be found in Valencia, where, for the past seventeen years, he has been engaged in building an eighty-six-acre cultural zone in a dried-up riverbed, in what was formerly an industrial zone. The City of Arts and Sciences, as it is known, includes a glass-walled children's science museum with a roof edged with spiny spikes, as if it were half stegosaurus, half paper shredder; a domed planetarium that, when doubled in a reflecting pool, resembles a human eye, complete with a sunshade whose mechanics imitate those of an eyelid, albeit with slower functionality; and, the most recently opened addition, an opera house that looks somewhat like the head of a massive prehistoric beetle. Currently under construction is a bridgelike overpass, which has a single four-hundred-foot mast that will be among the tallest structures in the city, and will ease access to the complex.

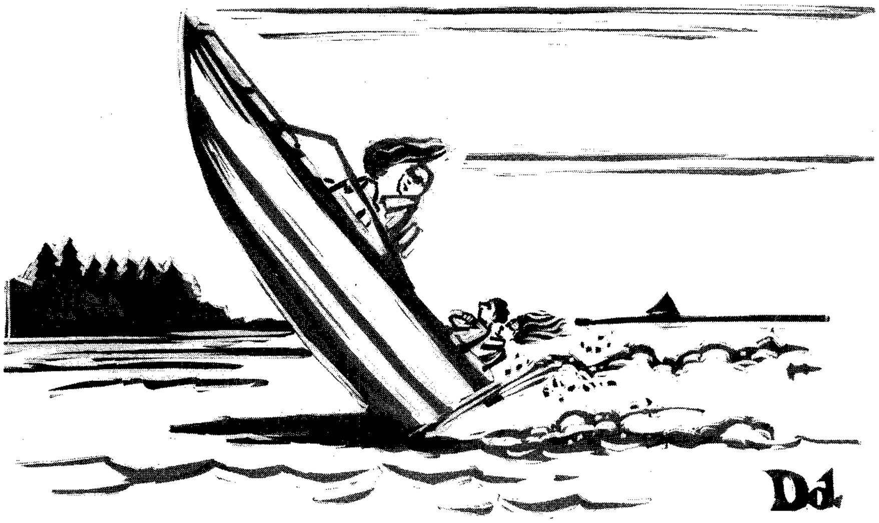
I visited the City of Arts and Sciences at the tail end of spring, before the city became unbearably humid. Even so, sunlight bounced unforgivingly from the white concrete concourses, upon which Calatrava's vast white concrete structures lay like bleached, scattered bones. The reflecting pools glared like highly polished mirrors, and skinny cypress trees in planters that had been whimsically sunk in the water provided ornament but no shade.

The effect was oppressively dazzling, and so was the grandiosity of the buildings, which, when seen en masse, seemed to be the unfettered expression of an artistic sensibility enraptured with its own idiosyncratic repertoire. The planetarium's eyeball loomed, unblinkingly, over a plaza across which groups of schoolchildren scampered. To one side stood the children's science museum, with its sloping sides of glass and its serrated roof. Owing to the exigencies of local politics and civic planning, the building was designed before it was decided exactly what kind of museum it would house; and the space, which Calatrava intended to be flooded with natural light, is, in the event, supremely ill-suited to its function, for which it has been divided into multiple darkened areas equipped with interactive video and other pedagogical displays.

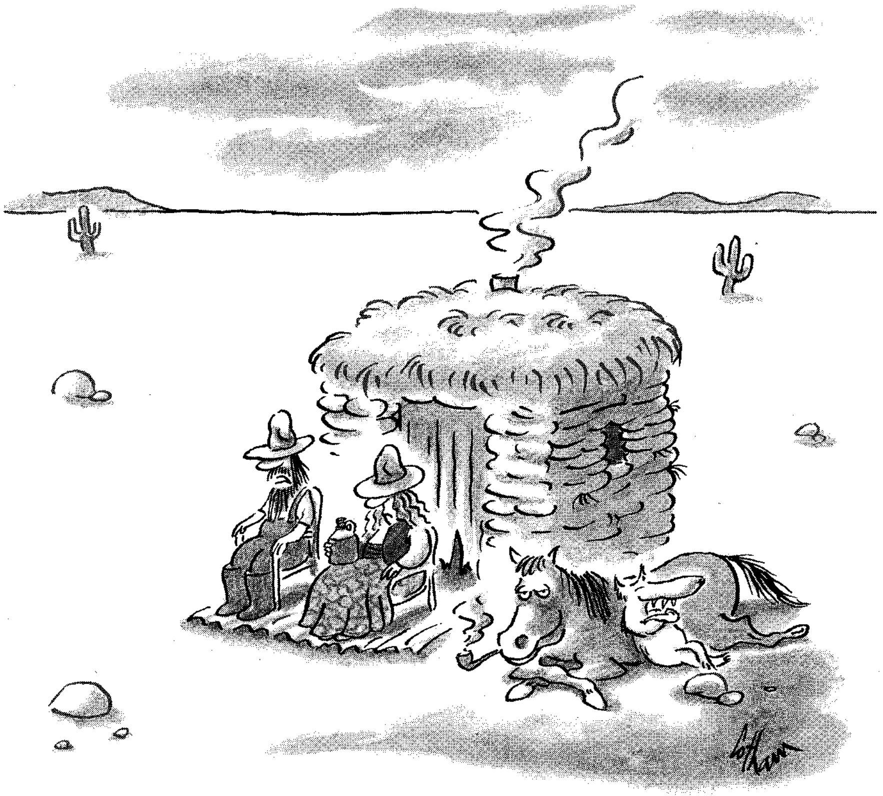
Across the plaza lay the opera house, which opened in 2005 and necessitated the creation of a new orchestra, directed by Lorin Maazel. (Calatrava recently dismissed a suggestion that he join the opera's board of directors. "I said, 'I am just a poor craftsman,' " he told me.) The storage and technical rooms had recently flooded, and work was under way to repair the damage. Flooding has been a recurrent problem at the building, and delayed the opening night of the 2007 season. Since then, Calatrava, who has officially been nominated the city's favorite son, has been battling the local government, charging it with paying insufficient attention to his warnings that the landscaping upon which it was insisting would cause runoff into his masterpiece.

The building, which contains four performance spaces, bears Calatrava's hallmarks: the arched, ribbed roof; the filtered natural light. There are a few aesthetic innovations; most notably, the walls of the opera house are clad with shimmering ceramic tiles of the same cobalt blue that can be seen on the roof of a nearby church. Similar blue tiles—which serve an acoustical and also a decorative function—appear on the rear wall of one of the recital halls where Calatrava has installed an enormous ceramic bas-relief of a ring of leaping dancers: his own design, if one that bears a debt of considerable proportions to Matisse. One panel of the piece features the handprint of Calatrava's daughter.

Later that afternoon, I joined Calatrava at his office, on a narrow side street in the old city, and we walked the few blocks to his home, an imposing mansion that is situated on the main square, opposite the cathedral, and that in the nineteenth century served as the headquarters of the city's Fire Department. He unlocked a heavy wooden door, and we passed through a vestibule and into a single enormous white room that had a lofty double-height ceiling and was surrounded by a mezzanine. The entire space was devoted to the display of Calatrava's sculpture. He and Tina had determined that none of his work would



"Did you remember to bring the DVD player, so the kids don't get bored?"



"I don't know what we'll do when our adjustable-rate mortgage resets."

enter the open market, and much of it would remain gathered together here, where the interrelatedness of the pieces could be maintained. One day, he explained, the space might become a foundation and a public museum, like that which Joan Miró bequeathed to his home town of Barcelona.

Edging the room was a series of eight abstract, modernist figures in Carrara marble, which, Calatrava explained, was a study in the progression of a curve folding in upon itself; in them, it was possible to see the embryonic suggestion of the curved carapace of his opera house. In the middle of the room stood a number of pedestals, most of them with mirrored tops, upon which were Calatrava's most recent sculptural endeavors: red and black ceramic vases, inverted so that they stood on their necks with the drums of their bases upraised, painted with images culled from Calatrava's sketchbooks of leaping figures, horses, and bulls. Calatrava had made them during his summer vacations in the past four years, firing them in kilns in the nearby town of Manises, a center of pottery-making since the fourteenth century. "I started working every day from six o'clock to seven o'clock, and then I went to do a little sport," he said. "I was working twelve or thirteen hours a day."

We departed for a café on the square, where Calatrava insisted that I sample the local drink, made from tiger nuts; and he explained that he was becoming more interested in incorporating his own art works as ornamental elements into the structures he designs. "Look at this façade," he said, gesturing toward the arched Gothic doorway to the cathedral opposite, which was embellished with carved figures of saints. "The architecture is support for art," he said. "In the Renaissance, many buildings were support for paintings. The Sistine Chapel—the architecture is very simple, and they painted inside it. La Cappella degli Scrovegni, in Padua, where Giotto painted."

Just as the sculptures in Calatrava's private museum made sense only when grouped together, so his entire œuvre should be understood as expressing a gradual evolution. "I don't do big jumps," he said. "In the moment where you make a big jump, you are copying yourself, or you are copying someone else. It is important to me to work in those steps; to work in sculpture, and to work in ceramics, which nourishes my architecture. Maybe for the critic of art who has his life centered in a grid, who goes from one great architect to another to another to another, from the Bauhaus to the Constructivists, and so on—in this scheme you will not find me, even though I know very well those stories from the history of art. But we have the freedom—and that is what is beautiful—to do whatever you think you should do."

Calatrava's success has, finally, provided him with the freedom to defend his art when necessary. A decade ago, he completed a footbridge for the city of Bilbao, which curved, under a sweeping parabolic arch of white steel, from one bank of the river to the other, and was paved with green glass tiles. When, later, some tower blocks, designed by Arata Isozaki, the Japanese architect, were built nearby, Isozaki was also commissioned to add a walkway to the Calatrava bridge, in order to facilitate access to his own development. Last fall, Calatrava accused the city of violating his intellectual-property rights, and initiated a three-million-euro lawsuit for moral damages. (Infuriated, Bilbao's mayor threatened to reclaim damages for the cost of repairing worn tiles.) Calatrava lost the case, in which his lawyers argued that the bridge should be considered a work of art rather than merely a piece of engineering; but the judgment was sympathetic to his cause, and he is considering an appeal.

"So it costs a little bit," he told me, as we sat in the early-evening light of the city's square. "But it is interesting. In 1926, Marcel Duchamp tried to bring in a sculpture of Brancusi, a bird in copper, for an exhibition. When it arrived at customs, the officials said, 'You have to pay a duty on copper entering this country.' The organizers of the exhibition said, 'But this is a piece of art,' and the customs said, 'No, this is a piece of copper.' Brancusi won." ♦

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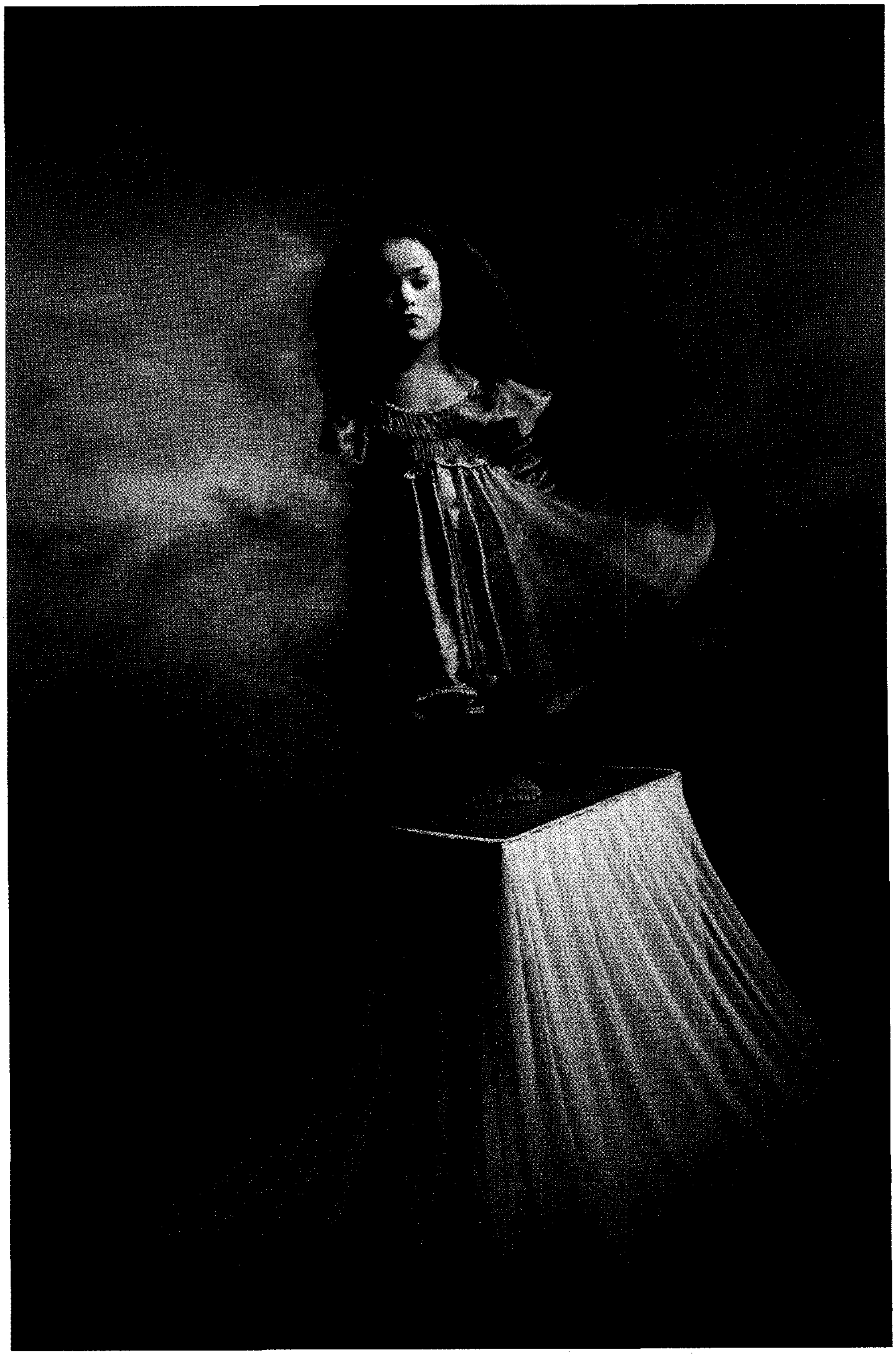
FICTION

GORSE IS NOT PEOPLE

BY JANET FRAME



Do you remember your twenty-first birthday? The party, the cake, and cutting a slice of it to put under your pillow that night, to make you dream of your future beloved; the giant key; the singing:

I'm twenty-one today!
Twenty-one today!
I've got the key of the door!
Never been twenty-one before!

Trivial, obvious words. Yet when the party was over and you lay in bed remembering the glinting key and the shamrock taste of the small glass of wine, and perhaps the taste of a sneaked last kiss in the dark, then the song seemed not trivial or obvious but a poetic statement of a temporal wonder. You had, as they say, attained your majority. You could vote in the elections; you could leave home against your parents' wishes; you could marry in defiance of all opposition. You had crossed a legal border into a free country, and you now walked equipped with a giant tinsel key, a cardboard key covered with threepenny spangles.

Or perhaps your twenty-first birthday did not happen that way. Perhaps there was no party, no cake, no wine, and no kiss? I would like to tell you about Naida's twenty-first birthday.

Naida was a dwarf, which is not really a rare thing. I suppose in our lifetime we see many dwarves—first, perhaps, at the circus, where they are advertised as the tiniest people in the world and we pay to watch them moving about in their almost walnut-shell or matchbox beds. Sometimes we pass them in the street and stare hard for a moment, then pretend we haven't seen them, until they have passed us and we look back, saying, "It must be strange, how strange it must be, such tiny folk, and us out of reach, like tall trees!"

Now, dwarves are people in their own right, who move among us, and below us, and are usually bright people, and kind—living in a place where staircases are mountains, and streets are caverns; they are brave to walk menaced by cliffs of brick and peaks of polished snow.

But Naida didn't live in what was called "the world." Since her tenth birthday, she had lived in a mental hospital, in the ward where they put people who were strange in shape and ways—where old frail women were tucked under thin frayed bedspreads, waiting for the time when their jaws would drop suddenly in the night; where curious bland children with slit eyes and lips bubbling with saliva played with rag toys or a red wooden engine in a yard that was hidden from the outside world. Sickly yellow grass curled up through the cracks in the concrete, but no geraniums blossomed there. Should not children have geraniums, the dry, sturdy, dusty flowers with the red stony-velvet smell?

Naida grew up in that yard, until on her fifteenth birthday—because she was beginning to take too much notice of the male patients and was writing notes to the baker and the pig boy and the farmhands—she was put in yet another ward, where, it was said, people stayed forever. She was the youngest patient there, and the smallest; everyone felt sorry for her, and was kind to her. On Sundays, the minister sometimes let her choose the hymn: "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "The Lord Is My Shepherd," or "Shall We Gather at the River." On Mondays, the sister of the ward took her to fetch supplies, or through to the matron's office for the mail; and every morning at eleven o'clock Naida went with the nurse to collect the bread. She was also taken up by the group of women who came each month with string bags full of yellowed magazines—the Ladies' Committee—and who had frightened looks on their faces, for they did not know how to talk to the patients but leaned forward and whispered to them, as if trying to share guilty secrets, and addressed them as "dear," talking as they might have talked to children, which was a sad approach, sad also for the committee women, who were attacked by the self-proclaimed goddess who resented being asked, the week before Christmas, "And what would you like Santa Claus to bring you, dear?"

Now, although Naida did not really remember much of any other world, she always talked of the day when she would be twenty-one, and free. She knew what happened when you were twenty-one: you were given a key and allowed to do as you pleased. She saw no reason to imagine that this would not happen to her; she believed that she would be in hospital only until she was twenty-one, at which point she could fend for herself, making her own way in the world, perhaps as a film star, a tap dancer, or a ballerina. How she looked forward to her twenty-first birthday! It was coming closer and closer. She ticked off the days on the calendar, and she sent a request to Uncle Henry of 4KN Radio, asking for "I'm Twenty-one Today" to be played over the air on the Friday that was her birthday—and also the song that she liked Nat King Cole to sing: "Too young to really be in love . . ."

For Naida was in love. She was in love with the pig boy. He passed by each day on the carts collecting the pig food, and each day he pushed a note through the window of the dayroom. He and Naida were going to run away together into the hills; they were going to dance every dance together forever; they would be married and have many children, and Naida at her wedding would have a long white dress and carry orange blossoms, and they would go to Hollywood or to Mexico City—it wasn't decided which—for their honeymoon. The pig boy had arranged everything.

The night before Naida's twenty-first birthday, the ward sister called her into the office. Naida's eyes were glistening with happiness, and her pale face was puckered in a smile that yet contained something of the expression you might see on children who had known death too young, or were making daisy chains when the bomb fell. She held under one arm her wax doll, Margella Lucia, which one of the nurses had bought for her and dressed as a bride; in her other hand she carried a lit cigarette, which she puffed on now and again, then withdrew, smeared with lipstick, from the vermillion cupid's bow of her lips.

"I'm twenty-one tomorrow," she said to the sister.

The sister sighed and finished signing her report book. She looked up, frowning.

"How often have I told you about cigarette ash? You'll burn the place down."

The sister still remembered the fire years before, when she was just a junior nurse in pink, a new nurse carrying coal, emptying ashes, polishing corridors. The whole ward had burned down then; the women were burned, too. You could still see the rotting wood and the rusty iron, the patches of nourished grass, brighter and more rich in color than the small jaundiced blades that struggled up in other places, through the concrete and the trodden park.

"I'm twenty-one tomorrow," Naida said again, impatiently.

The sister smiled. "I heard you," she

MICHAL CHELBIN, "THE CHAPELS, UNTITLED 01" (2002-03) /ANDREA MEISLIN GALLERY

said. "Tomorrow you're going to town, to talk to some men. You'll like that, won't you?"

Men! Naida's eyes glittered. Then she pouted.

"What kind of men?"

"Doctors, Naida. They want to talk to you."

"Why?"

"Well, they know you're twenty-one, I suppose."

"Is it because I'm going out in the world?"

The sister did not answer. Naida suddenly jerked her doll upright and the long-lashed blue eyes of the wax bride opened with a snapping sound, and stared, meltingly, coquettishly, at the sister.

"I know," Naida said. "It's because I'm twenty-one and going out in the world to be free. I've got my life to live, you know that. I can't stay here forever."

The last two sentences were ones she had heard the heroine of her favorite radio serial, Margella Lucia, speak.

"Now, we won't talk anymore about that," the sister said, "but you'll have a bath tonight, and I'll have clean clothes for you tomorrow. And you'll have a nice ride in the hospital car with Nurse Edgwood. Good night, Naida."

By the next morning, the whole ward knew that Naida was going to town for her birthday, to see the doctors about being free and making her way in the world because she was twenty-one; it was pretty definite that in a few days' time she would be saying goodbye to the hospital. Naida spread the news breathlessly, even stopping the doctor who was hurrying to the treatment room. The doctor smiled.

"I see. That's good news, Naida," he said.

He was only two years out of medical school and still believed that patients should be spoken to and smiled at.

Dressed in a skirt from the sewing room and a twinset that the matron had bought, and with a red ribbon threaded through her already graying hair, Naida waited for the car. She was not taking her doll with her. "Dolls!" she said contemptuously, and laid Margella Lucia on the sofa in the dayroom, asking Mary, the nun who was praying in a corner nearby, to look after it for her. Then she picked it up and kissed it goodbye, leaving traces of bright lipstick on its face: Allure Velvet. She tucked it down on the sofa again, and its beautifully ordered eyes shut in sleep.

Then the black government car, spitting and snarling gravel from its wheels, stopped outside, and the driver, a heavy man with a dark-blue suit and cuffless trousers, opened the door, like a chauffeur. The sister led Naida out of the ward.

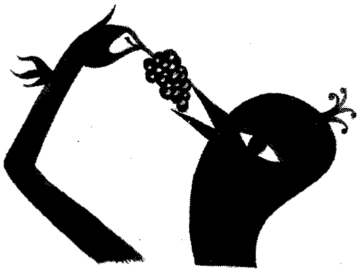
"Hello, Naida," Nurse Edgwood called from the car. "Happy birthday. This is for you." She held up a small silver brooch in the shape of a key, inset with a milky imitation pearl, the kind Woolworth's made, glowing secretly to itself. "I was going to buy a bird brooch, Naida, but you said you wanted a key. I'll change it if you want me to."

Naida panicked. "Oh, no. You've got to have a key for your twenty-first."

The nurse said nothing. The sister said nothing, either. The staff were forbidden to give presents to patients, but in Naida's case—because Naida had no visitors and no letters and no other home—an exception could be made. The sister gave Nurse Edgwood a folder of papers and shut the car door. Naida was engrossed with the key.

"I'd much rather have a key than a bird," she was insisting. "Silly old bird. Silly old bird."

The car moved forward. Everybody waved and smiled, and Naida waved and smiled back, not only at the sister but at the patients who were pressing their faces up against the windows, taking it all in, for not everybody had a chance to go to town—it was only when you needed an X-ray or a head operation. Naida had considered this in a waking moment of fear, in the night, for she had dreamed that it was her wedding day, and she had changed out of her wedding dress and into her going-away suit, and was waiting, up close to the pig boy, for the plane to take them on their honeymoon, not to Mexico City or even to Hollywood but home—to where Naida used to live, in the small square house with its wooden latticed eyebrows and the straggled lupines in the garden and the rusty old pump with dirty water pouring out. And, in the dream, the doctor, saying goodbye to them, had given Naida a small box with a half-naked filmy lady on the outside and what seemed to be chocolates inside—small silver squares. She unwrapped one of them, and it was her hair tied in silver paper; it was all bits of hair tied in silver paper. She put her hand to her head, to feel the perm she had been given for the wedding, but there was no perm there, for her hair was gone. Then the plane came out of the sky, and it was an ambulance to take her to town for a head operation, and the pig boy did nothing about it; he did not even speak. She pushed him, and he fell over stiffly like a rubber man, bouncing slightly on the ground. He wasn't real, nothing was real: the going-away suit was a nightie with a number, in red chain stitch, on the pocket. And then it was afterward, and the nurse was shining a torch in her eyes, to see how big the pupils were, and writing it down on a chart. Naida started to cry, waking up, and saw the night nurse with her torch, walking through the dormitory. So it was all a dream, really; and, besides, she would be twenty-one, and no one could deny that being twenty-one made a difference. The journey to town was to see the doctors about being free, and not because they wanted to come at her quick with a head operation.



As soon as the car was clear of the hospital, Naida turned to Nurse Edgwood, who was one of her favorite nurses, and held out her left hand. On the third finger was a ring that sparkled and shone and showed the world sapphire in its mirrors.

"It's my engagement ring," Naida said. "From the pig boy. Lofty. I'm seeing the doctors and getting out this weekend. Lofty is getting a special license, for it isn't right for engaged couples to wait. He saved up his canteen money to buy this for me—he hasn't had tobacco or cigarettes for weeks. It's sapphire, with one diamond. The diamond makes the most sparkle. Lofty is my true love."

The nurse looked at Naida's shrunken body, and the curled little hand with the

REUNION

Why do you keep returning,
alive, able to walk and gesture as you could not at the end,
your movements sketchy, more holographic
than warm? Thanksgiving dinner with all the relatives
and I alone with the suspicion I cannot speak:
You should be elsewhere.
Heavy drinking, as always. The newest baby
passed around like a contagious glow. Same teasing of the strong,
same muffled terror of the uncertain.
All the while you, at the head of the table like a signal
carried by a frayed wire—there, gone, there—raising a glass
to toast, the rim never touching your lips.

—*Jeffrey Skinner*

top-heavy blue-stone ring burning on the third finger, and the silver key brooch that was now pinned to Naida's child-woman breast.

"You'll enjoy yourself today," Nurse said. "What would you like to eat in town?"

"Sponge cake with four layers, and a dry Martini."

Outside in the world, it was not springtime, but the hills and paddocks were lit with bursts of gorse flowers, and the heavy drunken perfume came blowing through the open window of the car.

"What is it?" Naida asked.

"Gorse. The farmers' curse."

"Is it always there, yellow like that?"

"As far as I know. It has no definite season—no birthday, so to speak."

Naida was delighted. "No birthday," she repeated, fingering the brooch on her breast. "It's out in the paddocks there without a birthday."

She leaned out the window and stared at the happy chickenlike ruffles of color; the day was warm and sunny, yet with a thin cotton twist of cloud sewing together the blue gaps of sky, and a quick wind gulping down its own breath and the sweetness of the gorse.

Naida looked around her suddenly at the cruel, caging, black body of the car.

"I want out," she said, pointing to the hills. "There. I want out there without a birthday. Silly old car."

The nurse caught her wrist. "Don't, Naida," she said. "You'll spoil everything. And remember—it's your birthday. You can't go out there, in all that gorse."

Naida grew calm.

"Yes," she said. "It's my birthday and I'm twenty-one." She unsnipped the key brooch and clasped it in both hands. "I've got the key of the door."

Yes, they had sponge cake, only it was three layers, not four, the top chocolate, the second plain cream, the third raspberry. They drank not dry Martinis but milkshakes whipped white and red out of tall silver canisters; Naida twiggled her breath through the straw at the bottom to get the last drops. Then a machine in the corner played "Walkin' My Baby Back Home," at Naida's request. It was the song the baker used to sing to her when she collected the bread; if the nurse wasn't looking, he would take Naida into the small room off the room where the ovens were, and, putting his cigarette down, probably on the buns, only that didn't matter, he would kiss her and squeeze her and croon in her ear, "Walkin' my baby back home."

Naida felt lonely, hearing the song coming loud and wild out of the machine. The baker had promised her a ring with seven diamonds, and a necklace with thirty, if she married him. But Lofty, the pig boy, was taller, like the man in the serial, Margella Lucia's beloved. And you had to decide sometime.

"No. I don't like that song," Naida said, when "Walkin' My Baby Back Home" had finished. She puckered her face. "That song brings memories," she said.

The nurse was sympathetic; she had never heard Naida speak of her home, or of her mother and father and sisters and brothers, none of whom ever came to visit.

"What memories, Naida? Does it remind you of your mother and father, of being at home?"

Naida looked at her seriously.

"No," she said. "Silly. It's memories of love."

So they walked up and down the streets, eating ice creams, and looking in shopwindows at the frozen ladies with dolly-pillow breasts and long pink legs, being dressed by smart men with flat black hair and striped suits. They watched a toy engine moving clickety-clack around and around, being waved on by a man with a green flag instead of a hand; a tall man riding nowhere on a bicycle; and, best of all, in the window of the hardware store, four puppet men who were laying bricks to build something, a house or a church or a bathing shed or a place where airplanes are left to sleep. The first man jerked forward with a brick, and the second took it from him, leaving the first man in an anguished pose, with his hands praying in the air; and it was the same with the third man, until the brick reached the fourth, where you would have thought something peaceful would happen, but oh, no. Just as the fourth puppet prepared to lay the foundation, some electric device came into play whereby the brick was sneaked back to the first man, who jerked himself to life once more, and the building began again. Naida was fascinated.

"Except," she said, "it doesn't build."

Nurse looked at her watch: it was time for the interview.

"We have to go, Naida."

"Once more, to watch it being built."

"But the same thing happens. It won't end, unless the electricity breaks down or the battery runs out. They'll be there forever, doing the same thing in the same place."

The nurse waited outside. Naida sat in the room and faced the three men. Naida liked the tall, dark one immediately, because he smiled at her first, and offered her a cigarette. She took it, her fingers trembling, for the time had come that she had awaited and talked of for years, and marked on the calendar. It seemed incredible that perhaps next week she would be sitting in a luxury hotel in Hollywood or Mexico City (she and the pig boy would have to decide quite soon, so they could book tickets on the plane), eating sponge cake with four layers and drinking dry Martinis.

Naida sighed with bliss and impatience.

The short, sandy-haired man leaned forward. "Well," he said. "What's the sigh for, my dear?"

Naida looked at him derisively. Not much of a man there, she thought. He's going bald and he's got no eyebrows. I'll stick to the tall, dark one.

"I was thinking," she said. "Only thinking."

"And what exactly were you thinking about, eh?" the other man, who was quite fat, with a looped mustache, inquired.

Not much of a man there, either, Naida thought, surveying him. I'm right in sticking to the tall, dark one.

"Eh?" the man with the mustache persisted.

"Mind your own business. M.Y.O.B.," Naida said abruptly.

"I should think so," the dark man said, smiling kindly. "We haven't even introduced ourselves, have we? Now, we're three men who want to have a little chat with you and see how happy you are and what we can do for you."

That's fair, Naida thought.

"This is Mr. Berk, and Dr. Pillet, and I am Dr. Craig. And your name is—" He hesitated. Naida was sure he knew her name, but, seeing as he was the nicest and the handsomest, she smiled her special smile at him and, tucking her ring out of sight under her sleeve, she said, "I'm Naida."

"And how old are you, Naida?"

Naida was sure he knew this, too, but she liked to oblige.

"I'm twenty-one today," she said.

"And do you know what being twenty-one means?" the sandy-haired man, Mr. Berk, asked.

"Who doesn't? I can get married. I'm free."

"And if you were free, Naida, what else would you do, besides get married?"

Naida was carried away with excitement. It was no use; in spite of being attracted to the tall, dark Dr. Craig and feeling that perhaps she and he could be friends quite soon, she could not keep her hand covered any longer. She showed the ring.

"My engagement ring. Sapphires and one diamond. I'm getting married next week, and going by plane to Mexico City. Or to Hollywood. It isn't decided yet."

The dark man frowned. Naida noticed this and thought, He's jealous—I can tell.

Feeling sorry for him, she smiled her special smile again. He looked up from his papers.

"So it's all arranged," he said slowly, and Naida detected the sadness and regret in his voice, but she knew it couldn't be helped; you couldn't shilly-shally all your life—you had to decide sometime. Even if the ring she was wearing did have fewer diamonds than the baker had promised, and, perhaps, fewer than the tall, dark man with his fat salary would have provided. Yes, you had to make up your mind.

"Wouldn't you like to go home, Naida?" the man with the mustache asked.

Naida did not speak. Her lips trembled. She looked for comfort to the dark man, who smiled quickly, giving her all of the smile, from the beginning to the end, and then what was left over in his eyes.

The sandy-haired man, trying to put his spoke in and win favor, split his face into a smile as well. "Happy birthday!" he said triumphantly.

The others joined in a murmur of "Happy birthday."

"You're not very big for your age, are you, Naida?" It was the sandy-haired man again. "How will you manage in the world?"

Naida looked defiant. "I'm a bastard," she said. "My mother thought me into being small—that's why I didn't grow and have got yellow skin, instead of pink. But I'll manage all right. You'll see."

Her lips quivered. The tall man offered

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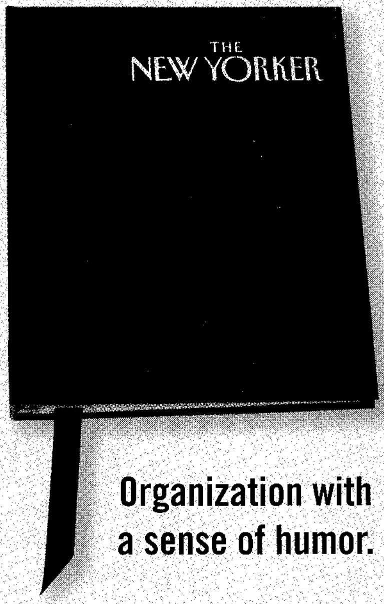

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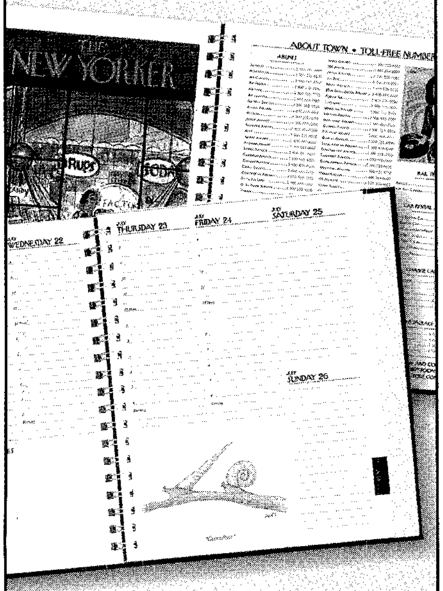

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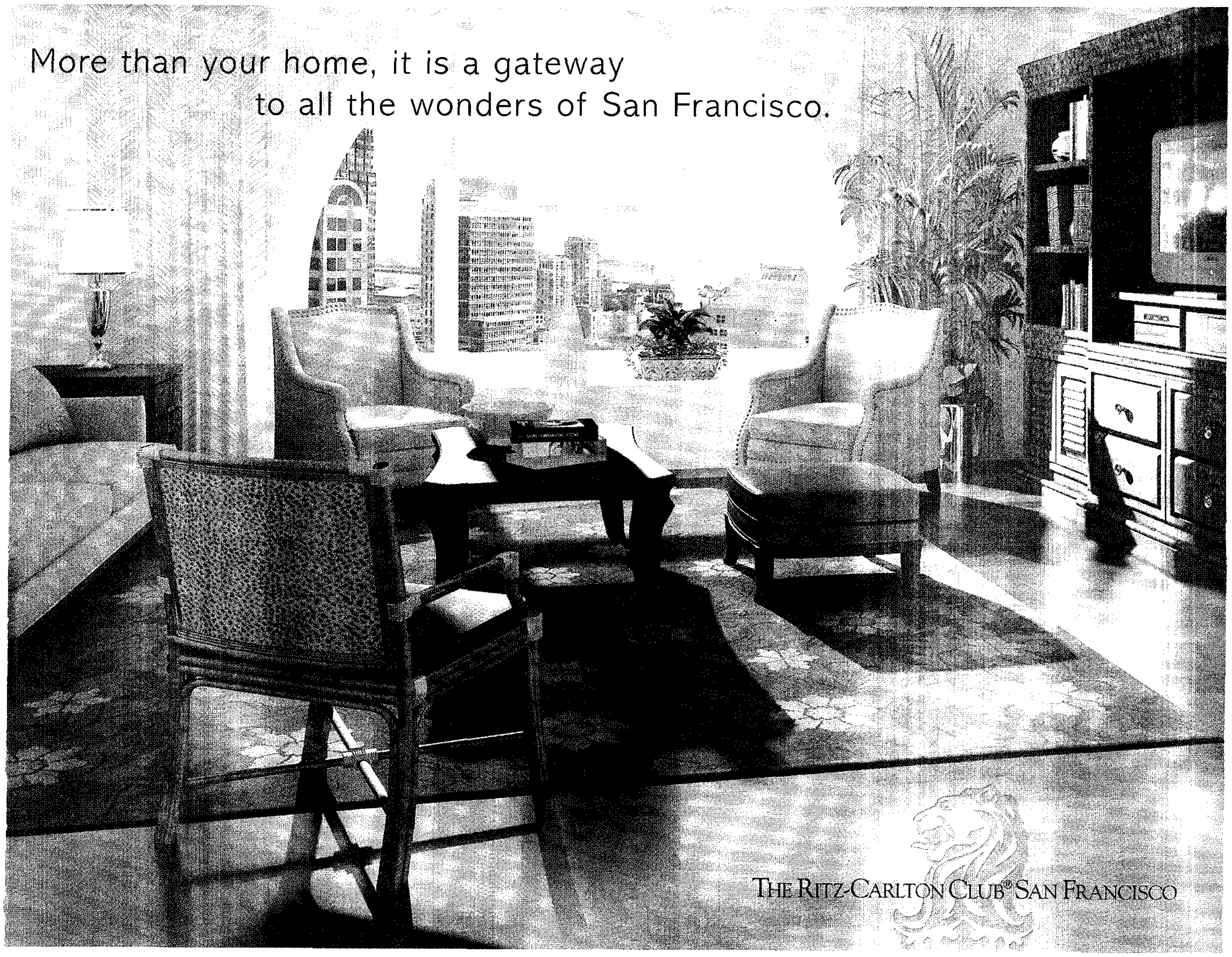
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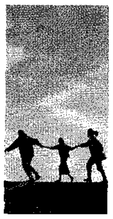

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her another cigarette, and leaned forward with a match for her, so that their faces were quite close together, and she smelled his shaving-cream-and-tobacco smell.

"Now we're going to ask you a few more questions, Naida," he almost whispered, looking into her eyes. Her heart tumbled over and over. "Your name *is* Naida, isn't it?" he said.

"I told you it was," Naida said, patiently.

"Well, now. I seem to have forgotten the date. Perhaps you could tell me."

Naida told him, reminding him also that it was her birthday.

"Of course. Of course. And this place here where we're having our little chat, what's the name of this place?"

"It's to do with hospitals—I can tell by the smell," Naida said.

He smiled once more. Then the man with the mustache pounced. "What are seven threes?" he said.

Naida looked at him in amazement, then she faltered, looking down at her sapphire ring.

"I don't know about those things. I'm not specially educated."

"You read the newspapers?"

"I can't read so well. I like the pictures."

"And what did you say you would do if you were free?"

"I am free. I'm twenty-one, and getting married, and going next week to Mexico City or Hollywood, by plane." She was saying it now like a charm, for she felt suddenly afraid, and uncertain, as if it wouldn't happen, as if she'd just go back to the hospital and nothing would be any different. But that couldn't be it: she was twenty-one; next week she would be free. She felt for the key on her breast and touched its hard glitter.

"It's wrong to steal, isn't it?" the sandy-haired man said, sidling up to her.

"I never stole it. It's for my birthday—it's the key."

"Of course you didn't steal it, Naida. We're just talking to you. Why do you think it's wrong to steal?"

Naida screwed up her face. "Because," she said.

"Quite right," the dark man said. "Quite right. And what are you going to do when you're married?"

Again she could feel the regret in his voice, but she knew he had to face things, so she told him.

"Have babies, and give cocktail parties on the terrace."

The men exchanged glances, and Dr. Craig wrote something down, carefully, on a sheet of paper. He held out his hand.

"Goodbye," he said.

Their hands touched and clasped; Naida trembled.

The other two men also shook hands with her and said goodbye, and the nurse came in, summoned by a little brass bell on the desk, to take Naida and the sheet of paper away. When they were standing in the waiting room, Naida burst into tears, her thin huddled shoulders moving with the pattern of her sobbing; her tears fell on the blue-stone ring, blurring it, so that she could not see her face or the world in it anymore, and it was secret, like the pearl. She did not know why she was crying. It was just that she had been asked the questions in a pouncing way, and that nothing seemed neat and planned anymore, as it had been; it was all muddled and unclear, with nothing sparkling and shining.

The nurse waited.

"We're going back now," she said. "Here, put on some lipstick. You're twenty-one, remember. You're not acting twenty-one, crying like that."

Naida smiled, taking hold of the one thing that mattered. "Yes, I'm twenty-one, and after we've gone back past the hills and the gorse, and I pack my things, and get my trousseau ready, I'll be free."

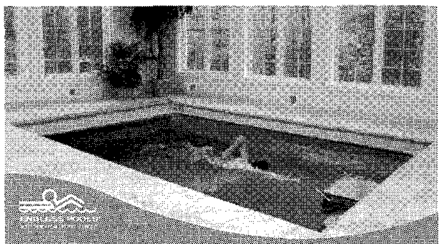
Naida rushed into the dayroom to retrieve Margella Lucia from the care of the nun, Mary, all in black, who was sitting in the corner praying and telling her beads.

"Has she been good?" Naida asked, waking the doll with a kiss, so that its blue eyes popped open, flirting with the nothingness in front of them. Then, with the doll kissed and clutched in her arms, Naida sat down, preparing to tell the awed and envious patients about her wonderful journey to town, and how she would be set free next week because she was twenty-one.

In the ward office, the nurse handed to the sister the paper that the three men had signed. The wording on the paper began, "Registered under the Mental Defectives Act, 1928. This is to certify that Naida Wilma Tait, aged twenty-one . . ."

And so on. The same thing, over and over; brick puppetry; and gorse is not people. ♦

—1954



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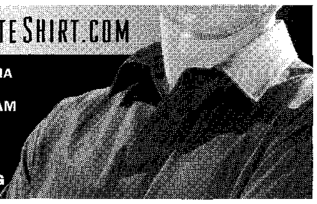

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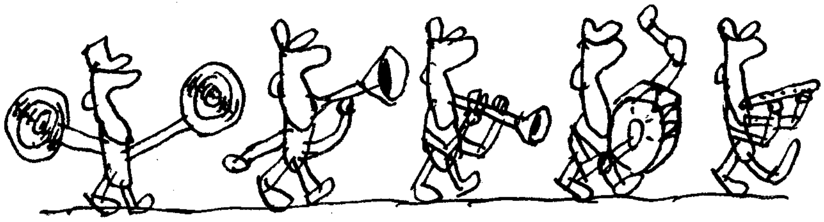


BOOKS

MAKEUP AND MAKE-BELIEVE

Max Factor's life of beautification.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

The happy story of Max Factor, as enthusiastically told by Fred E. Basten in "Max Factor: The Man Who Changed the Faces of the World" (Arcade; $24.95), begins, like a movie, at a high-energy moment of extreme peril:

> On a winter night in February 1904, twenty-seven-year-old Max Faktor huddled with his wife and three young children in a Russian forest, frightened more for the family he had kept secret for nearly five years than of the wind and snow or even the approaching czar's men calling his name. Only days earlier, Max Faktor was a favorite of the royal family and was esteemed by the royal court. Now he was being hunted as a fugitive.

STRAWBERRY PASTEL
PEACH PASTEL
PINK PASTEL
HONEY PASTEL
APRICOT PASTEL
LILAC PASTEL
6 VIBRANT

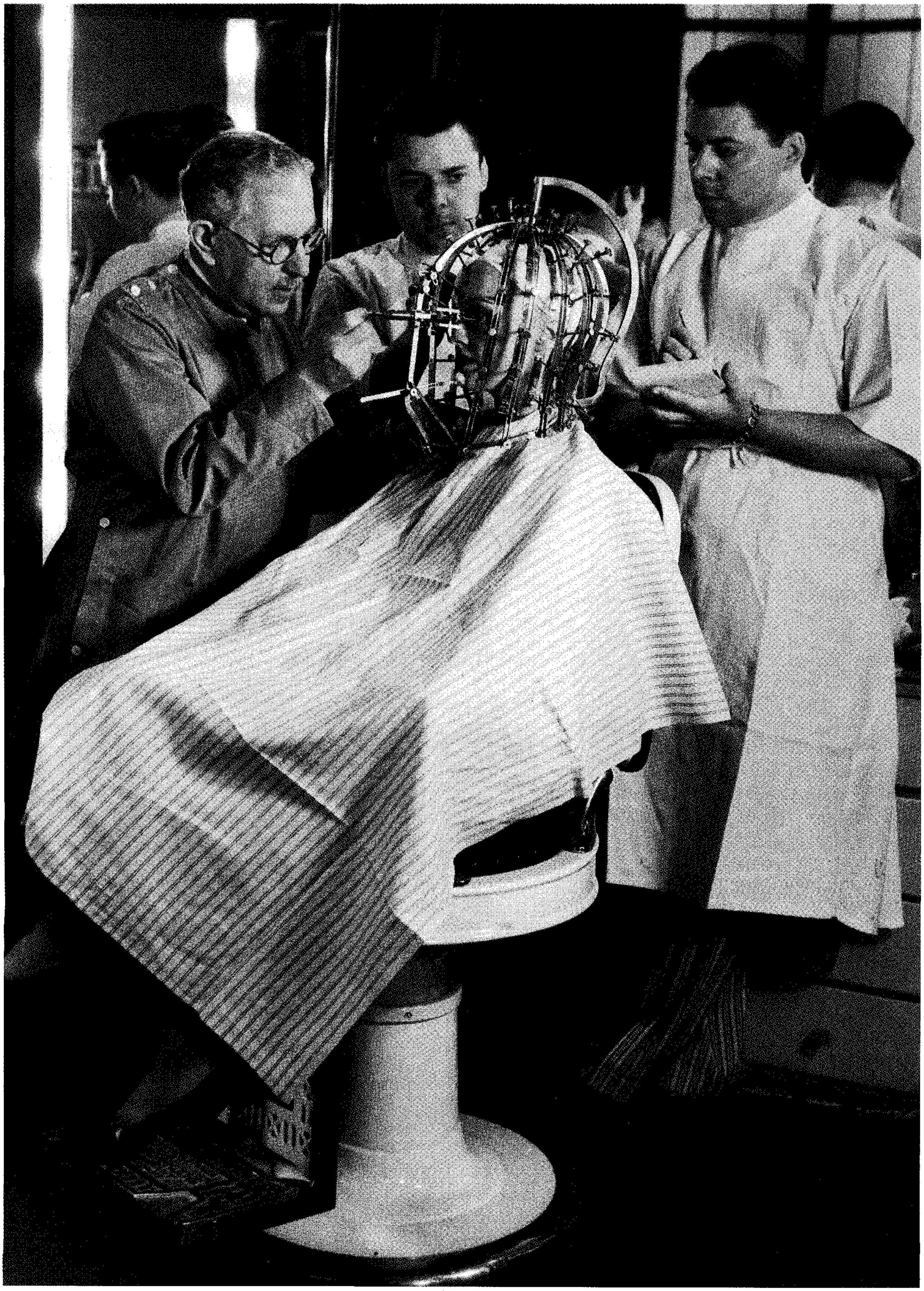
Factor's makeup helped stars like Carole Lombard (above) look good onscreen.

The little ("barely five feet tall") Polish Jew's involvement with the czar had advanced with the quick progressions of a fairy tale. One of ten children born to a worker in the textile mills of Lodz, he was reared by his siblings and had scant formal education. At the age of seven, he was set to selling oranges, peanuts, and candy in the lobby of Lodz's Czarina Theatre; he later called this his "introduction to the world of make-believe." At the age of eight, he worked as an apothecary's assistant, learning some chemistry; at just nine, he became an apprentice to the city's leading wigmaker and cosmetician. Within four years, he was proficient enough to join the staff of the Berlin hair stylist Anton, and by the age of fourteen he had moved on to Moscow, where he worked for Korpo, the cosmetician to the Imperial Russian Grand Opera. At his eighteenth birthday, Faktor was obliged to serve four years in the Russian Army; he was picked for the Hospital Corps, and took up nurse's duties. "I did not like it but I learned much," he later said.

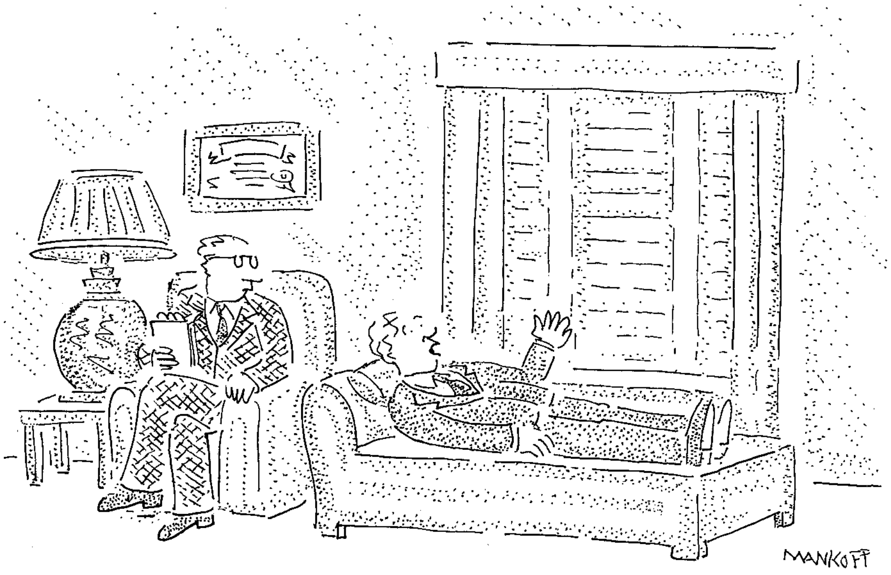
Discharged at twenty-two, he opened a small shop in the Moscow suburb of R'azan, "making and selling his own creams, rouges, fragrances, and wigs." According to Basten, a member of a passing theatrical troupe stopped in on the way to a performance before the imperial family, and, "within weeks, Max's business took a royal upswing in sales and he was adopted by the summer court." The courtiers adopted him so thoroughly that he had little time left for his own shop—"All my attention," he remembered, "went to their individual needs by showing them how to enhance their good points and conceal the less good." The aristocrats paid well and introduced him to their luxurious world but were possessive: he could not leave the court unescorted and was limited to brief weekly visits to his shop; he had to marry on the sly, and fathered three children in five years. Meanwhile, anti-Semitism was on the rise in Russia; in 1903, Czar Nicholas II "ordered a siege on the Jews he so feared and hated, and burned down their villages." Max longed for America, where a brother and an uncle had settled in St. Louis, with its impending World's Fair.

A friendly general noticed the court beautician's downcast mood and, being told of Max's secret family, arranged for his escape. Before an interview with the general's personal physician, Max covered himself with yellowish makeup—an especially fairy-tale touch. His sickly appearance won him an official recommendation for three recuperative months in Karlsbad, a spa in far-off Bohemia to which court members often repaired. Russian guards accompanied him, however, so he continually faked a limp; as he hobbled into the main square of Karlsbad, whom should he find huddled at the fountain but his wife, Esther, and their three children! In a twinkling, they disappeared into the Bohemian (not Russian, as in the opening paragraph) forest and, walking mostly at night, travelled "seemingly endless miles"—hundreds and hundreds, it must have been, to the nearest seacoast—"until they reached a clearing in the woods. Ahead was a seaport where the steamship *Molka III* was boarding for America. Max happily paid the fare. Money was not a

ABOVE: BENOÎT JACQUES; BOTTOM: EVERETT COLLECTION, COURTESY PROCTER & GAMBLE; OPPOSITE: FPG/HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES



Factor and his "beauty calibrator," intended to detect subtle facial characteristics that needed to be disguised or enhanced.



"But if you cure my hypochondria I won't have any hobbies."

• •

problem. Over the years, he had saved nearly $40,000, which he carried with him in a pouch." No passports were required then, in the flood tide of immigration. A customs official misspelled "Faktor" as "Factor."

America was not without difficulties for Max and his magic pouch: his English was nonexistent at first, and remained heavily accented; an English-speaking partner who helped him set up shop at the fair in St. Louis absconded with the funds; his wife, less than two years after giving birth to their fourth child, dropped dead on a sidewalk; he sent to Russia for a second wife, and she, Helen, after bearing him his fifth offspring, proved to be so temperamental that he had to divorce her. However, he had opened a barbershop in St. Louis, and it prospered; in 1908, he married a neighbor, Jennie Cook, and headed to California to try his luck supplying cosmetics and hairpieces to a new brand of entertainment, the motion pictures. In those days, one-reelers were being shot all over Los Angeles, under tirelessly blue skies, and Max, from his little shop on the edge of downtown ("Max Factor's Antiseptic Hair Store. Toupees made-to-order. High-grade work"), spotted some "ghoulish" people passing by. He followed them to an empty lot where a bar brawl was being staged and filmed. Max was curious about what they had on their faces:

> Some were using stage make-up, while others wore concoctions they had made themselves: odd mixtures of Vaseline and flour, lard and cornstarch, or cold cream and paprika. The more adventurous had even tried ground brick dust mixed with Vaseline or lard to get a flesh-colored look.

Such pastes, applied an eighth of an inch thick, formed a mask that cracked under the stress of facial expression; this didn't matter at the distances of a live theatre, but in film closeups even hairline cracks showed. In 1914, working in his shop's laboratory, Factor created "a greasepaint in cream rather than stick form, ultra-thin in consistency, completely flexible on the skin, and produced in twelve precisely graduated shades." The silent-film comedians—Chaplin, Keaton, Fatty Arbuckle—were the first to try it, and "returned not only to give Max their enthusiastic approval but to have him personally apply the new make-up."

Then, there were wigs. Max persuaded Cecil B. De Mille, in town to direct the large-scale Western "The Squaw Man," that wigs and hairpieces painstakingly formed of real human hair (135,168 individually knotted strands went into an average Max Factor wig, with sixty thousand in a full beard and a mere seven thousand in a false mustache) were more photogenic than "clumsy substitutes such as straw, mattress stuffing, excelsior, Spanish moss, wool, tobacco leaves, even mohair stuffing from Model-T Fords!" De Mille admired Factor's wigs but said he couldn't afford them, and suggested renting them. The deposit needed to safeguard the costly wigs posed a sticking point, which Factor, resorting not for the last time to his brood of useful children, circumvented by waiving the deposit and having De Mille hire his three sons as Indian extras, paying them three dollars a day; at the end of each day, they collected their father's wigs or had their pay docked. By 1916, Max Factor & Company was booming enough to move to larger quarters, in the prestigious Pantages Building, "at the center of it all."

Triumph followed triumph. As Basten—a former assistant in the company's public-relations department—tells it, Max devised false eyelashes for Phyllis Haver, who was tired of having pies smashed in her face and wanted to move up to vamp roles. He created a yellow makeup to lighten Rudolph Valentino's skin so that the actor, who ground pigments to help speed up the process, could escape bit parts as a swarthy villain. Max brought the tempestuous Pola Negri to heel by shouting back at her in their native Polish. When he outgrew his space in the Pantages Building, he moved to a new store, on South Hill Street, and called it the House of Make-Up. The theatrical term "make-up"—Max always insisted on the hyphen—had been considered risqué, but at the urging of his son Frank he began applying it to his products, and it swept the world. Snubbed when he visited the German offices of Leichner, for whose stick greasepaint he had been a longtime American distributor, he cabled his sons, "Start selling greasepaint in tubes," and the tubes were, of course, another triumph. For Douglas Fairbanks's sweaty exertions, Max invented "the first perspiration-proof body make-up" and then "devised the reverse—cinematic sweat—by simply combining equal parts of water with mineral oil." For M-G-M's production of "Ben-Hur," he and his staff conjured up more than six hundred gallons of light-olive makeup to match the army of pale local extras to the darker extras already filmed in Italy. He conquered the persistent problem of lip pomade's melting under the hot studio lights by firmly pressing two thumbprints onto the actress's upper lip and then one thumbprint on her lower lip, thus single-handedly creating the sensational new look of "bee-stung" lips. For Joan Crawford, he created "the smear."

There seemed no limit to the labors that Hollywood could set before this diminutive Hercules. Each technical advance in cinematic art posed a fresh problem in makeup. When, in the late twenties, sound came in, the microphones "picked up the noisy sputter of the carbon arc lights—the standard film lighting used . . . for fifteen years." The new tungsten lamps were quiet but also much hotter, and provided a softer light. "The old Orthochromatic film, which had been used since the birth of the film industry, was not sensitive enough to properly record faces under the new lighting." And so:

> The old film was replaced by super-sensitive, faster Panchromatic film, but it made faces appear noticeably darker, as if in shadow. The new film made every item in the Max Factor make-up line for motion pictures instantly obsolete.

Max to his own rescue! He and Frank labored for months

> to test and perfect an entirely new formulation in a wider-than-ever range of shades that reflected the correct degree of light required by the sensitive new film. It had only one drawback. Because it was designed for black-and-white film, it looked bizarre in real life. For example, actresses wore dark brown lipstick, which photographed as red on film.

This new Panchromatic makeup was, Frank admitted, "horrifying to look at" in daylight. For its invention, Max Factor was presented with a special certificate by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, in recognition of his contribution to "Incandescent Illumination Research." Frank recalled, "I had never seen my father simultaneously so happy and so on the verge of tears."

Dr. Herbert Kalmus, an M.I.T. graduate, had been developing Technicolor film since 1912; its first successful two-color (red and green) version was employed throughout the Douglas Fairbanks feature "The Black Pirate," in 1926, and its full three-color form was displayed in Disney cartoons of the early thirties and an otherwise undistinguished live-action two-reeler, "La Cucaracha," in 1934. Everybody who viewed Technicolor, including Kalmus and Max, "realized something was wrong":

> Filmmakers were using Max Factor's Panchromatic make-up, created for black-and-white film. . . . Although thin and transparent, its grease-paint base left a slight sheen on the skin, which reflected surrounding colors. If an actor was standing near red drapes, for example, his face would have a red cast.

Bette Davis, Carole Lombard, Joan Crawford, Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer, and Claudette Colbert were among the stars who refused to appear in so unflattering a light. It may have been while brooding upon this rebellion that Max stepped from a curb and was hit by a delivery truck. While he was laid up, Frank hustled back and forth between the Factor labs and the Technicolor company, and, by the time his father was back, walking with a cane, had the reflective problem nearly licked. Basten relates:

> Together, they improved the original formula until the make-up was more porous, allowing air to penetrate it and the skin to breathe. They also overcame its slight tendency toward flakiness, so that no particles were shed after the make-up was applied. . . . The new make-up, which the Factors called the "T-D" series, was in a solid cake form. When applied with a damp sponge, it offered a transparent matte finish while concealing small skin blemishes and imperfections. The project was enormously complex, as Max admitted in a press release.

The fully refined preparation, its name changed to Pan-Cake, for its panlike container and its cakelike form, was perhaps Max Factor's greatest invention; not only did it make Technicolor visually palatable but women on the set kept stealing it off the shelves for personal use. Based upon the spectroscopic perception that skin holds a multitude of tints yet is "essentially a translucent covering with relatively little color of its own," Pan-Cake was too dark to successfully wear at night. Max at first resisted the popular demand that it be produced in lighter shades, saying that it was made for the movies and there was only enough of it for them, but Frank saw to its wide commercial release; it "immediately became the fastest- and largest-selling single make-up item in the history of cosmetics," outselling all sixty-five of the imitations advertising themselves with the now magic word "cake."

It was not long after this that Max, in Europe with his son Davis pursuing some of the possibilities that his company's international success had created, received a death threat (modestly demanding two hundred dollars, or else) that unnerved him and prompted his return home; he died in his bed in 1938, at the early age of sixty-one. Max Factor & Company did not die with him; Frank even legally changed his name to Max to smooth over the transition. Under its new Max, the company sup-

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plied the copper-green makeup that Margaret Hamilton wore as the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wizard of Oz," as well as the color of the Munchkins and the six that flash by in the Horse of a Different Color sequence. For the masses, it produced Tru-Color, "the world's first perfect lipstick . . . non-drying but indelible," its mettle proved in many an ordeal at the Kissing Machine—a device with rubber lips, a crank, and a pressure gauge. But Basten's idolizing tome loses steam once its dapper, ambidextrous (he could apply makeup with either hand), chemically resourceful hero passes from its narrative.

The company survived to develop makeup for television, but its glory days were with the golden age of the movie studios, when the stars used to provide product endorsements for as little as a dollar. Their glamour rubbed off on Max Factor, and vice versa. As the nation's cinema palaces emptied and the fading studios cut their costs, Factors started to drift out of the executive ranks of what had been, ever since Max's boys became "Jewish Indians" to protect hired wigs, a family firm. Its stock began to trade on the New York Stock Exchange in the early sixties, shortly after it acquired the French company of Parfums Corday; in 1973, it was itself acquired, by the Norton Simon conglomerate, which ten years later was taken over by Esmark, which a year later merged with Beatrice Companies, which made Max Factor part of its International Playtex division and moved its headquarters to Stamford, Connecticut. This left high and dry in Hollywood the Max Factor Make-Up Studio, a palatial Art Deco showpiece with offices and labs and makeup rooms (for brunettes, blondes, redheads, and "brownettes"), whose opening, in 1935, as floodlights probed the skies and stars from Betty Grable to Bela Lugosi signed a parchment Scroll of Fame, had been the crowning glory of Max Factor's ascent. Now the building, restored after some thin times, survives as Donelle Dadigan's Hollywood History Museum, Ms. Dadigan being a "Beverly Hills real estate developer and passionate Hollywood memorabilia collector." But of course all the memorabilia in the world won't bring back Max Factor's Hollywood or—and who would mourn?—the innocence of a cultural climate where makeup was a shameful secret, associated with sexual prostitution and stage performers.

This biography foregrounds its central figure in almost total isolation from the history of cosmetics and the beauty industry—topics of lively interest to contemporary social historians, almost all of them female, as it happens. In the slim and frivolously titled "Read My Lips: A Cultural History of Lipstick," by Meg Cohen Ragas and Karen Kozlowski (1998), we learn that an ancient Egyptian papyrus shows a woman applying lip rouge. "Inventing Beauty," by Teresa Riordan (2004), points out that as photography became, from 1870 to 1900, more popular so, too, did cosmetics, and that, "as the Depression deepened, cosmetics sales climbed steadily," and that, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, the proliferation of synthetic compounds freed cosmetics from the drawbacks of naturally viscid and odorous oils and solvents. Riordan illustrates her text with patent applications of beauty enhancers right out of a torturer's manual. "Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture," by Kathy Peiss (1998), counters arguments, raised with special vehemence in the countercultural sixties, against the beauty industry's manipulation and trivialization of women by pointing out that it gave multitudes of needy women respectable employment as beauticians, manicurists, and saleswomen, as well as enabling some entrepreneurs, like Elizabeth Arden and Helena Rubinstein, and the African-American Annie Turnbo Malone and Madam C. J. Walker, who manufactured hair-care products, to head up successful corporations. Max Factor, Peiss asserts, became a factor in this female-dominated industry by shunning the air of foppish effeminacy that since the eighteenth century had attached to male hairdressers: "Photographs of Factor show him simultaneously as makeup artist, chemist, and father figure." To preserve this solemn image his publicists discouraged him from giving, in his comically strong accent, interviews.

Sally Pointer's "The Artifice of Beauty: A History and Practical Guide to Perfumes and Cosmetics" (2005) offers a thorough and harrowing history of cosmetics, going back to the first prehistoric traces of red ochre found in graves. The reader puts the book down convinced of the incorrigible human, and particularly feminine, appetite for beauty aids. Pointer quotes eight apt lines by George Gascoigne, in his blank-verse satire of 1576, "The Steele Glas":

> Behold, behold, they neuer stande
> content,
> With God, with kinde, with any helpe of
> Arte,
> But curle their locks, with bodkins and
> with braids,
> But dye their heare, with sundry subtill
> sleights,
> But paint and slicke, til fayrest face be
> foule,
> But bumbast, bolster, frisle, and
> perfume:
> They marre with muske, the balme
> which nature made,
> And dig for death, in dellicatest dishes.

Even as Gascoigne wrote, his monarch, Elizabeth I, was poisoning her complexion with ceruse, a lead-based skin whitener used in ancient Rome and revived in the Renaissance. Ceruse persisted into the eighteenth century as an ingredient in potent "washballs," long after many a woman of fashion had died of such toxins. The contemporary barbarism of piercing (eyebrow, tongue, navel) was preceded in the eighteen-nineties by a craze for nipple rings; a contemporary wearer wrote that "many ladies are ready to bear the passing pain for the sake of love."

For the sake of love, broadly speaking, American women in the early twentieth century, overcoming Puritan scruples enforced by male employers, husbands, editorial writers, and legislators (in Kansas in 1915 a law was proposed making it illegal for women under the age of forty-four to wear cosmetics "for the purpose of creating a false impression"), began to paint themselves. Movies enhanced by Max Factor makeup were not alone to blame, but they did help legitimatize artifice and its false impressions. Their heightened images spoke to women of an attainable better self. As I remember it, years ago a scientific study, which electronically tracked eyeball movement, demonstrated that, during the showing of a motion picture, the eyes of the men in the audience followed the woman on the screen. But so did the eyes of the women. ♦

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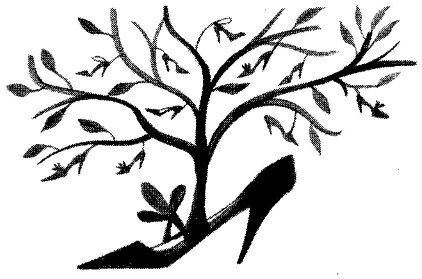
Vintage Max Factor advertisements.

BRIEFLY NOTED

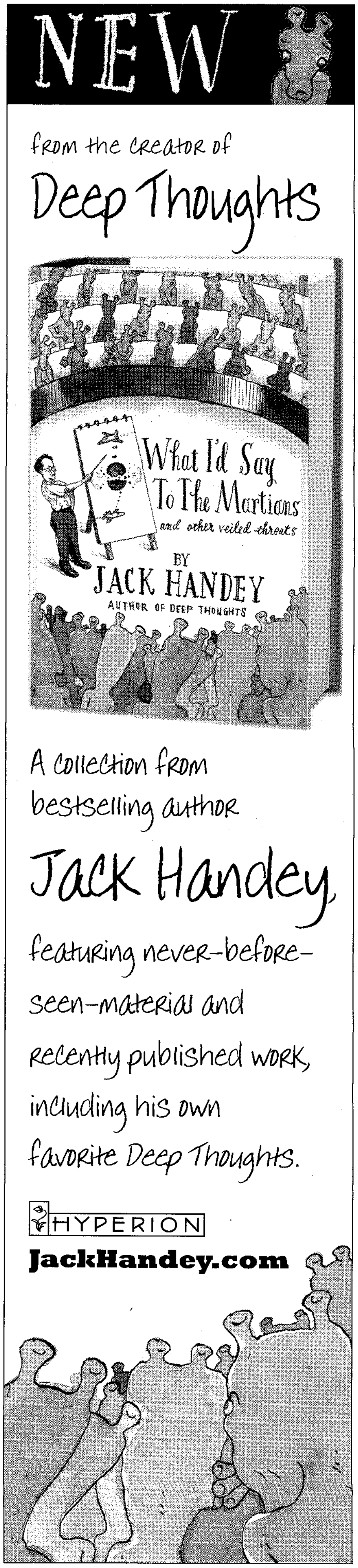
The Gargoyle, *by Andrew Davidson (Doubleday; $25.95).* This début novel combines Christian mysticism, medieval imagery, and postmodern fonts to create a sometimes inane and sometimes diverting story. The narrator is a burn victim and former "coke-addled pornographer" now reduced to a mummified state in a hospital bed, where he is visited by an Angelina Jolie composite: she has dark hair, "mood eyes" (they change color like the rings), and Latin phrases tattooed on her biceps. She also believes that she and the narrator were lovers in Germany, circa 1300, and regales him with stories of their past lives. While much of the historical writing is convincing, the contemporary scenes are less so—with lines like "My nervous intestines soon flamenco-danced themselves into sizzling pain," and a love-conquers-all ending that cancels out the more invigorating moments in monasteries.

The End of Sleep, *by Rowan Somerville (Norton; $23.95).* In this madcap picaresque, we follow Fin, an Irish journalist, as he spends a day in the streets of Cairo pursuing a story of buried treasure that he believes will restore his floundering career at an English-language newspaper there. Fin seeks a "pacy linear narrative with obvious and satisfying climaxes," but Somerville leads us, instead, down numerous back alleys and side streets, with frequent breaks for mint tea. The best moments are those of unbridled irreverence, such as when Fin, who is conversant only in "gastronomical Arabic," becomes "inappropriately passionate" on the subject of the perfect kebab (the secret ingredient is thyme), or when we are told that the desert air is "so pure you can smell the farts of the camels." Fin's surreal experiences amid Cairo's chaos are a vivid reminder of the challenges inherent in encountering the foreign, and the rewards of "not only learning to accept, but inhabit" difference.



The Same Man, *by David Lebedoff (Random House; $26).* George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh met on only one occasion, in 1949; neither man kept a record of what happened, and perhaps the only certain outcome of the meeting is the existence of this idiosyncratic book. Offering an appreciation of two writers typically seen as opposites, Lebedoff strives for neither biographical nor critical comprehensiveness. He argues that both were essentially anti-modernist—Waugh a nostalgic moralist and Orwell a prophetic idealist—and therefore, in a sense, "the same man." It's a tenuous thesis that is not well served by Lebedoff's method; his treatment of Waugh as a gifted stylist and Orwell as a truth-peddler tends to underscore rather than challenge their dissimilarities. Still, Lebedoff affirms his odd couple's cultural relevance, using their writing as a lens to scrutinize everything from political correctness to the dangers of e-mail.

The Book of Dreams, *by Federico Fellini, edited by Tullio Kezich and Vittorio Boarini, and translated from the Italian by Aaron Maines and David Stanton (Rizzoli; $125).* In the early nineteen-sixties, under the influence of a Jungian analyst, Fellini started keeping a dream diary. His films, always fantastical, soon took a distinctly oneiric turn, and he eventually filled some five hundred sheets with drawings and descriptions of his dreams, here reproduced in facsimile with English translations. Fellini archetypes (chiefly, gargantuan women in various states of undress and arousal), characters, and collaborators abound. The actor and playwright Eduardo di Filippo performs his own death onstage to rapturous, if insincere, acclaim; Pope Paul VI, who, as a cardinal, had condemned "La Dolce Vita," ascends with Fellini in a balloon basket and points excitedly to a blimp-sized beauty in a bathing costume whose exhalations, he explains, create the clouds in the sky. As a child, Fellini named the four corners of his bed after movie theatres: "The show started as soon as I shut my eyes."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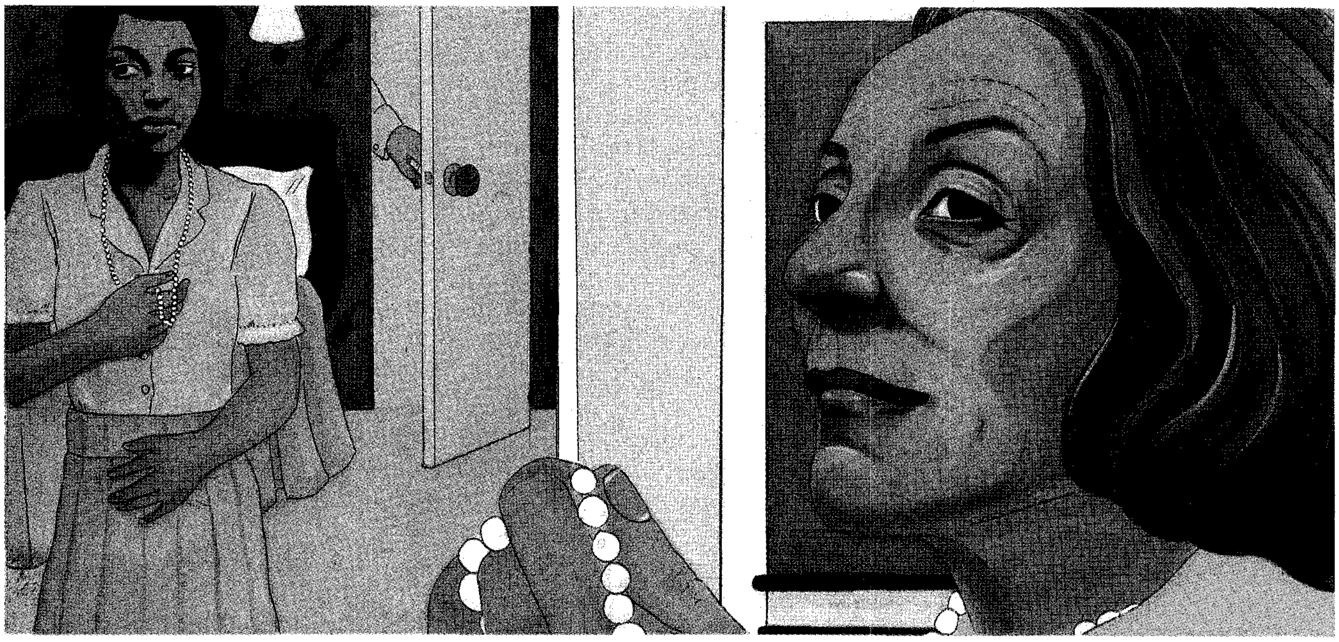
A family's secrets are revealed in "The First Breeze of Summer."

BY HILTON ALS

In 1969, Larry Neal, a black writer, published an essay titled "Any Day Now: Black Art and Black Liberation." In it, Neal tried to clarify the goals of the Black Arts Movement, an ideological aesthetic that was first laid out by the poet and activist Amiri Baraka, after Malcolm X's assassination, four years earlier. The Black Arts Movement, Neal wrote, sought "to link, in a highly conscious manner, art and politics in order to assist in the liberation of black people." The propaganda-filled plays of this movement—by Baraka, Charles Fuller, and Ed Bullins, among others—are, for the most part, forgettable. Caught somewhere between art and activism, they call for revolutions, not ovations. (Bullins, the movement's most talented son, did not produce his masterwork, 1970's "The Fabulous Miss Marie," until he began to see his plays less as a way to get Whitey and more as an expression of his own sensibility.)



From teen-ager to matriarch: Yaya DaCosta and Leslie Uggams portray the troubled life of one woman in Leslie Lee's 1975 play.

LARA TOMLIN

Luckily, the Black Arts Movement wasn't the only game in town. In 1967, as an alternative to Black Arts' unabashed militancy, the director and playwright Douglas Turner Ward co-founded the Negro Ensemble Company, a troupe that performed at the St. Marks Playhouse, in the East Village, and specialized in mawkish narratives whose sweetness was intended to soften, if not disguise, the ideology at the company's core. Although the New Federal Theatre, founded by Woodie King, Jr., at the Henry Street Settlement, farther downtown, presented a more diverse selection of plays, from 1970 on—treating writers ranging from Tennessee Williams to Ntozake Shange with equal respect—it is the Negro Ensemble Company that theatregoers recognize as New York's ur-black dramatic voice.

And it's a measure of the N.E.C.'s continued historical significance that the Signature Theatre Company is devoting its entire new season to works that were first produced there, beginning with a revival of Leslie Lee's 1975 melodrama "The First Breeze of Summer" (at the Peter Norton Space, under the direction of Ruben Santiago-Hudson). After a few months downtown, the original staging moved to Broadway, where it was nominated for a Tony for best play. In a recent interview, Lee recalled that Walter Kerr, then the drama critic for the *Times*, said "that 'First Breeze' was the first African-American play that invited him in to share in it." Lee added, "I loved that comment. This play isn't good because it is a black play. I work very hard to create characters that can speak for all of society." One can't help wondering if Lee isn't being disingenuous, given that his overdependence on the tropes of American blackness is, in the end, what undermines this too long, predictable, and sad play.

In the era of Afro puffs and leisure suits, Milton and Hattie Edwards (Keith Randolph Smith and Marva Hicks) are God-fearing, hardworking Negroes who run a construction business somewhere in the Northeast. They have two sons: the competitive, woman-loving, twenty-something Nate (Brandon Dirden), and his bookish, closeted teen-age brother, Lou (Jason Dirden), who aspires to a college education and a career as a doctor. Two women are visiting the Edwards home on this hot, suffocating summer day: Milton's mother and the family matriarch, Gremmar (Leslie Uggams), and her daughter, Edna (the brilliant, irrepressible Brenda Pressley). (Gremmar had another son, Sam, who died.)

Near the start of the play, Gremmar

is alone onstage, slowly picking out a hymn on the family piano. The moment is quiet, mournful, made even more beautiful by the way it gives Uggams a chance *not* to shine—at least, not outwardly. (Ever since she made a name for herself, in the sixties, with the television band leader Mitch Miller, Uggams has twinkled a trifle too brightly; she often seems to be hiding something behind her discordant cuteness.) Lights up, stage right, and we're in Gremmar's bedroom, her memory cave, from which she recalls the three love affairs that punctuate the present-day action of the script. Yaya DaCosta plays the young Gremmar, known as Lucretia, in the flashback segments. Thin and pretty, DaCosta—who got her start as a contestant on "America's Next Top Model"—is making her stage début, and it's a strange and stilted one. She has an inordinate desire to live up to the part—she works like a Trojan—but her energy spins in place, whirlpool-like, and she fails to stimulate the three exceptional actors who play her lovers.

First, there's Sam Green (the talented Gilbert Owuor), a young black man who is eager to go out into the world and wrest his fortune from it, the better to support his future bride and their unborn child. But Sam, having sallied forth, never returns to reclaim his love. Next, Lucretia takes up with the son of her white employer, Briton Woodward (the strong Quincy Dunn-Baker), who makes no bones about his fetishization of her features. Again, she gets pregnant—this time with Edna. And, again, a man fails her. She moves to another town, where she meets a bashful lay minister named Harper Edwards (the incredible John Earl Jelks), who falls in love with her but ultimately can't deal with her shady past or her unapologetic sexuality. Stereotypically, he rapes her, and then takes to drink.

Between Gremmar's reminiscences, we see the Edwards family now, passing time, greeting the preacher, celebrating Nate's engagement. Although the pain that grips Gremmar's heart during the course of the play eventually overtakes her, it's Pressley's portrayal of the bitter Edna that affects us most deeply. Convinced that her mother loves her less than she does Milton because her father was white, Edna lashes out at everyone around her. Pressley's performance sends us to the stratosphere; she doesn't so much act her role as live it, in a way that overwhelms the entire production—and makes clear its shortcomings.

Early in the play, Edna joins Nate and Lou on the porch. Fanning herself, she says to her youngest nephew, "How come you look so cool, Louis?"

NATE: You know them colored people, Aunt Edna—just love the heat!

LOU (*slightly embarrassed*): I can feel it! . . . I mean . . . it's hot, but—

NATE: Listen at Lou, Aunt Edna—doesn't want to be accused of being a nigger for the life of him!

This scene, like several involving Lou, is painful and emotionally honest, and Lee handles it with skill. If he had done more with its subtext—Nate and Edna's contempt for Lou's sexual difference (at one point, Edna says slyly, without looking at him, "Well, Louis, Nathan's got his girlfriend—where's yours?")—he could have made his most popular work a great play about the intersection of black Christianity and homophobia. Instead, he focusses on the soap opera of Gremmar's lovers, none of whom are nearly as interesting as the tormented Lou and the role he plays in the family. When "Breeze" ends with a bombastic tantrum that turns Lou into a caricature of the shrill, woman-hating gay man, one longs for the subtlety of an earlier scene, in which Lou and Gremmar play Scrabble. Lou uses a word—"cilia"—that his grandmother doesn't know. Gremmar looks at him a trifle suspiciously. Then she plays her own word—"beseech"—and quotes the Bible to support it: "I beseech you therefore, brethren . . . that ye present your bodies . . . a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Here Lee comes closest to exposing the lie at the heart of Lou's exchanges with his family, the awful isolation that goes with being "different."

Fourteen years after "Breeze" was first produced, the playwright and filmmaker Bill Gunn premièred a play, "The Forbidden City," that dealt with his homosexuality and his complicated relationship with his mother. Lee didn't break down walls the way Gunn did, but the two writers shared one thing: a desire to rid black culture of its Puritanism and to show how it can stifle revolution, emotional and otherwise. ♦

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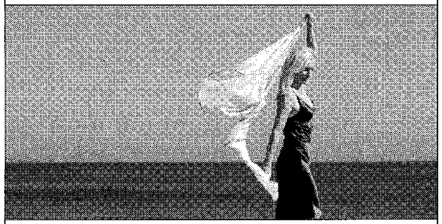

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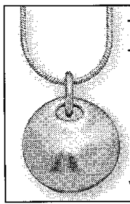

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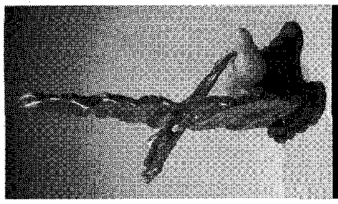

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POP MUSIC

SEX AND SERMONS

David Banner hedges his hip-hop bet.

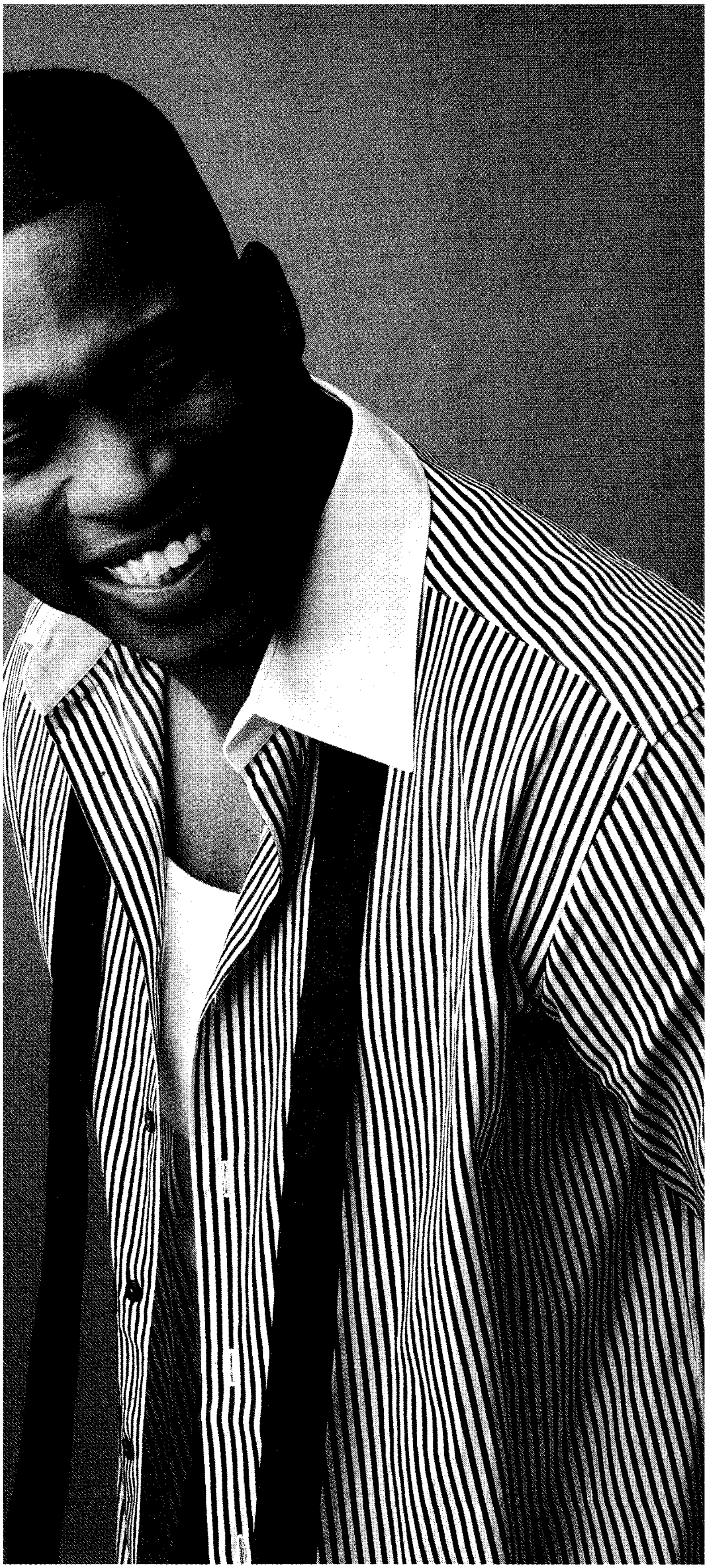
BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Why would you take on a stage name if your given name was the excellent and euphonious Lavell Crump? If, perhaps, you needed to suggest that your persona was not fixed. Calling yourself David Banner—a mild-mannered alter ego of the Incredible Hulk—makes perfect sense for a big, six-foot-three man from Jackson, Mississippi, who has scored club hits with crude, elemental songs about sex and has called himself "the most political motherfucker of all." Lavell Crump was the student-government president at Southern University, is one semester short of a master's degree in education, and is a product of the hip-hop generation who can do a variety of things, most of them well. In 2007 alone, Banner appeared in the movie "Black Snake Moan," testified before Congress about offensive language in hip-hop, and launched his own show for Adult Swim, on the Cartoon Network. He has worked as a producer for other artists, and has made a name for himself with hits like T.I.'s 2004 song "Rubber Band Man" and "La La," from Lil Wayne's "Tha Carter III." Not a predictable c.v.

For the first time in several years, Banner has a hit of his own, a song called "Get Like Me," performed with the young, clean-cut R. & B. singer Chris Brown. It's taken from Banner's new album, "The Greatest Story Ever Told." "Get Like Me" is a diverting, if formulaic track centered on the plausible assertion that Banner's Chevy is cooler than yours. The problem with "The Greatest Story" is the problem with much of what Banner does: it's all over the place. For an actor, a dozen different roles is good business; for an album, too much variety just slows down the show. Banner, a rapper from a Southern state not generally part of the hip-hop mainstream, is possibly too complex a figure to capture the attention of an audience increasingly skeptical of hip-hop. Perhaps Banner is a musician only by default, and was wise to choose an open-ended identity amenable to politics, television, or some larger cultural activity. (Before running for office, he will need to make it clear that he does not actually turn green when frustrated.)

In person, Banner has the physical presence of two and the personality of twelve; he's an enormous man who hugs fans and smiles for anyone with a camera phone. At a live show in New York in July, he kept his shirt on for only a few minutes before stripping down to reveal the long "MISSISSIPPI" tattoo across the top of his back. He led his makeshift rock band through a schizophrenic show that didn't sound like any of his albums, which stick to the elemental combination of drums and keyboards that works best in clubs and well-appointed car stereos. Banner was a sweaty, headbanging yeller, spraying the audience with champagne and water—he seemed to have a particularly good time performing a snippet of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" for the "white folks"—and then repeatedly stopping the show so he could sit down on a stool and sermonize. He called out the Bush Administration as oil salesmen, speculated about the similarities between his sex drive and that of Martin Luther King, Jr., and became very friendly with several women in the front row who had trouble staying quiet for his speechifying. But when Banner began to complain about the promotion of his last album, "Certified," and worried about the fate of "The Greatest Story," it wasn't hard to wonder how, exactly, anyone would promote this unpredictable polymath.

In one interview, Banner spoke about losing fifty-four pounds; it was the kind of moment that is usually the cue for entertainers to talk about how well they are feeling and how happy they are about their new self. Not Banner: "With the young Latino population, and young blacks, hypertension and high blood pressure is in our genetics. So, you know, I wanna take this fame that I've acquired,



doing movies, you know, than I do in rap." Photograph by Robert Maxwell.

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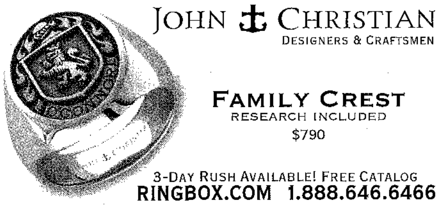
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man, and just teach people." He went on, "What makes us different from animals is the ability to make sound choices," although he didn't explain how animals would feel about biscuits. (His own feelings are quite positive.) In an interview last January, Banner said, "I make more money doing cartoons, I make more money doing movies, you know, than I do in rap." And on the mixtape Banner offered for free in June, before the new album was released, he called his record company "the plantation" and promised to give the entire album away for free if it wasn't released on schedule in July. (It was.)

Banner spends several minutes on the album theorizing about recording careers—his own, Prince's, Curtis Mayfield's—and how he has complicated his commercial appeal by doing things like wearing a suit on his last album cover. ("My nigger, we college students, too. Nigger—we hustlers, we own businesses, too. We ain't just no white-T niggers.") Banner doesn't seem interested in sticking to any particular talking points, or presenting an easily remembered image; he'd presumably rather bring up as many questions and ideas as possible and let them intermingle. There is no thumbnail of David Banner, and if you see only one video or one album cover you may not get much of an idea of his work, or possibly the wrong one.

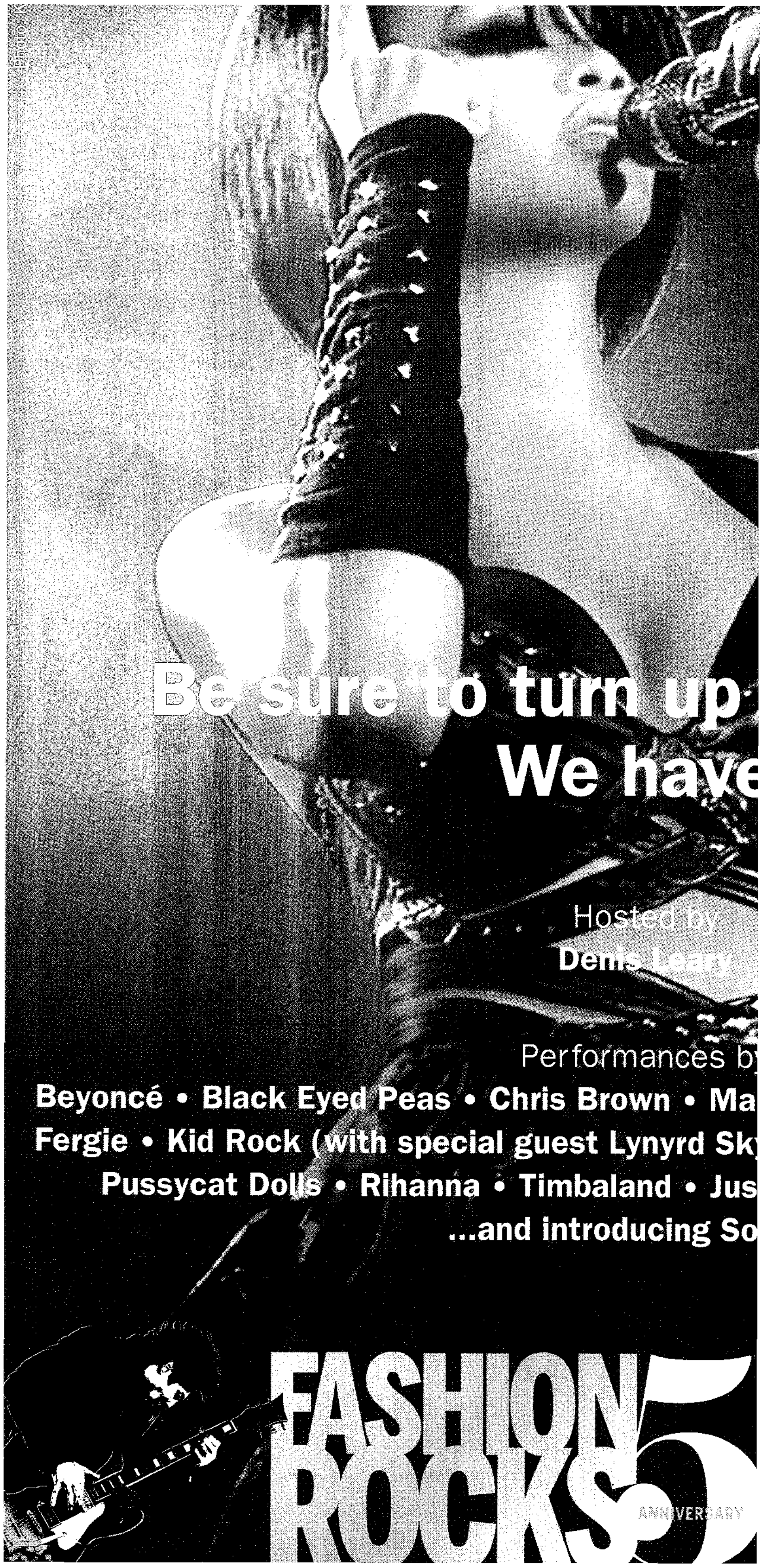
The biggest Banner hit before "Get Like Me" was "Play," a minimal, raunchy song that mimicked the Ying Yang Twins' 2005 hit "Wait (The Whisper Song)," which features one of the least coded choruses in pop history. ("Wait till you see my dick!") No metaphorical broomsticks there. Though both songs are equally explicit, Banner's is the anatomic inverse: his entire focus, give or take a line, is his partner's pleasure. He'll lick her "like a peppermint swirl." (In the video, actual sex is reduced to a metaphorical gym workout, leaving Banner to stalk several Lycra-clad women in the manner of an overfamiliar personal trainer.)

The obsession with raw, unadorned sex is a part of Banner's work that he appears to have no intention of downplaying. (On "A Girl," from "The Greatest Story," Banner asks his partner to sign a waiver before engaging in rough sex, which is fairly responsible as raunch goes but may be unlikely to dispel some tourists' fears about the genre, especially since Banner seems most worried about getting sued if his partner passes out.)

Banner's best song is a perfect indication of how hard it is to file him. "Cadillac on 22's" is a song from Banner's 2003 "Mississippi: The Album," which he reprises as "Cadillac on 22's Part 2" on "The Greatest Story." The song begins with an acoustic guitar, and not just a sample—it's the musical center. Somebody fingerpicks a languorous sequence of chords that sounds a bit like a Southern-rock ballad over a subtle drum-machine beat. We're already outside any obvious radio format, and then Banner sings the chorus in a raw tenor, which doesn't make it sound any more like rap, though it certainly is: "Cadillacs on 22's, I ain't did nothing in my life but stayed true. Pimp my voice and mack these beats and pray to the Lord for these Mississippi streets, hey!" Banner is discussing his own work again, trying to figure out what he should talk about, or if he should be talking at all. "Lord I'm sick of jumping, Lord please just tell me something. My folks still dumping my music bumping but I feel nothing. My heart is steadily pumping, my heart is steadily breaking. Sometimes I feel like I'm faking, man, I'm so sick of taking." It's a blues, both in spirit and sound, which may be the genre Banner is working inside of in everything but name.

"Part 2" is musically almost identical, though the changes have been altered, using brighter major chords, and the tempo has picked up slightly. The first time around, Banner was close to moaning, audibly pained. This time, he sounds like he's looking backward, from a dry perch. The blues has become gospel: "Life is hard but we gonna make it through the storm, through the rain, if we stay close to God, man." The storm here doesn't need to be a metaphor—Banner's own Heal the Hood foundation was active in the post-Katrina period, staging a benefit concert and distributing aid to victims of the floods. That sounds more like Banner than any single song—direct contact, in all its complications. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM
Sasha Frere-Jones's pop-music blog.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THE CURRENT CINEMA

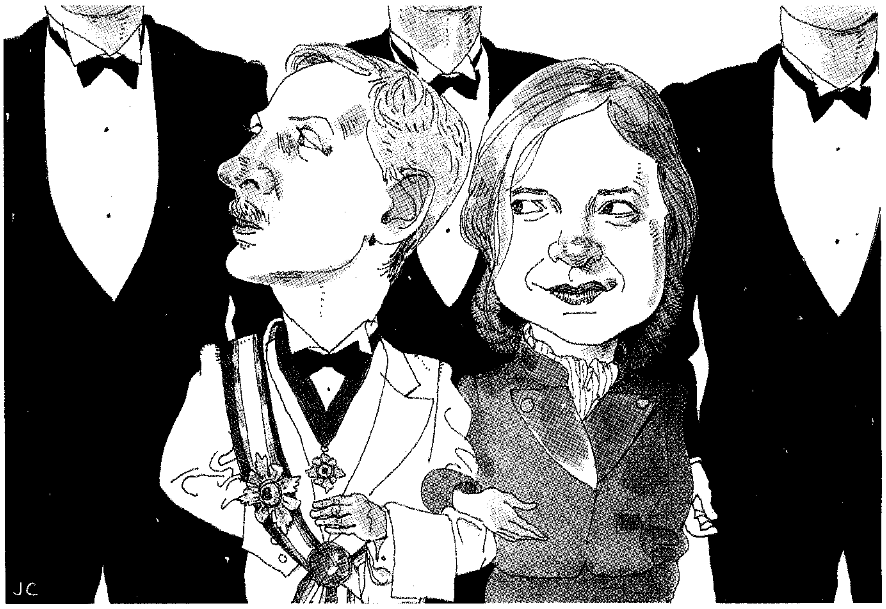
UNDER SUSPICION

"I Served the King of England" and "Traitor."

BY DAVID DENBY

Jiří Menzel's "I Served the King of England" is a Czech national epic served up with champagne and truffles. This graceful and leisurely movie, adapted from a 1974 novel by the masterly Bohumil Hrabal, covers an enormous time span, starting in the nineteen-thirties, then passing through the Nazi occupation and the Communist period. It covers an enormous range of experience, too, yet the style is consistently playful, even frivolous, and slyly erotic—at times, we might be watching a burlesque operetta. Menzel, whose first adaptation of Hrabal's work, "Closely Watched Trains," won an Academy Award in 1967, did not emigrate to this country, as Ivan Passer and Milos Forman, his fellow-directors of the Czech film renaissance, did. Staying behind, Menzel went through myriad ups and downs in the final twenty years of Communist rule (for a while, his work was banned) and developed, I would guess, a healthy sense of the absurd, which doubtless shaped his adaptation of Hrabal's material. The movie dramatizes the incongruities of the Czech experience by charting the unlikely progress of Jan Dítě (Ivan Barnev), a charming Everyman who is very lucky until suddenly he isn't. Short, blond, and highly mobile, Dítě, a waiter by trade, is a cross between Candide and Forrest Gump—ever optimistic, and completely unmarked by knowledge or experience. The movie begins at the end of the story, in the nineteen-sixties, when Dítě (played, at this point, by Oldrich Kaiser) is released from a Communist prison in Prague after serving almost fifteen years for becoming a rich man, and is ordered to move to a town in Bohemia where, before the war, Sudeten Germans lived. When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, in 1938, "liberating" the Sudeten Germans was his initial excuse. But after the war the ethnic Germans were expelled from the area, leaving ghost towns behind. In this melancholy graveyard, Dítě, now wised up and becalmed, reviews his life.

In an elegant Prague restaurant, the other waiters tower over the young Dítě, and the diners are as fat as walruses. But he survives and prospers; he's a mover—eager to please yet opportunistic, a man with fabulous animal instincts—and Ivan Barnev, a Bulgarian actor, spins with his trays among the customers as if pirouetting on ice skates. Menzel plays up the Chaplin associations; the small Barnev has Chaplin's darting physical agility and lecherous instincts hidden by honeyed manners. Dítě dreams of being a millionaire but throws away his money whenever he has any, particularly favoring a lovely young prostitute. In "Closely Watched Trains," Menzel turned a boy's sexual initiation into lyrical rapture, and, forty-two years later, the sexual mood is richer, more luxurious, but just as rapturous. The scenes are staged without passion or torment; the sex is pure delectation. Afterward, the naked bodies are strewn with money, flowers, and fruit.



Ivan Barnev and Julia Jentsch in a film by the veteran Czech director Jiří Menzel.

JOE CIARDIELLO

Aleš Březina's score, with its shimmering strings, is rich in anticipation—some of it sounds like the beginning of a pas de deux from a nineteenth-century ballet. The entire movie is brushed with fairy dust. Easily, and with supreme confidence, Menzel plays with anti-realism, turning an early sequence into a mock silent film and others into episodes that seem to leap off a stage. Much of the movie is set in restaurants and hotel lobbies; Menzel may feel that the pomp of old Europe can now be done only as farce. At a reception for a tiny Abyssinian prince and his retinue, a host of waiters, stationed down the length of a long banquet table, pour glasses of wine one after another, each bottle moving forward like the chorines' legs in a Busby Berkeley number. A classy hotel in the country, gleaming white in the sun, turns out to be a brothel run by a dandy racing around the furniture in a wheelchair. It's staffed by girls, dressed stylishly, who accommodate eager middle-aged men—they enter the scene like frat boys in a college revue. The hotel, offering the ultimate in luxury before the war, undergoes an ironic transformation. Dítě, too dumb to see that he's choosing the wrong side, falls in love with a Sudeten German (Julia Jentsch) who is a stern Hitler fanatic. She goes off to fight with the Wehrmacht, and Dítě stays behind at the hotel, which the S.S. turns into a breeding ground for the master race: naked German blondes fling themselves into a swimming pool in giddy anticipation of the arrival of supermen from the front who will impregnate them. Later in the war, the girls are replaced in the pool by naked German soldiers with a leg or an arm missing. The joking turns sardonic, quietly savage, even vengeful.

Menzel strings his sequences together with great affection and skill, but the movie, an absurdist picaresque, doesn't have much cumulative impact, and perhaps the hero is too much a lightweight to hold an epic together. Ditě never determines his own fate. He ignores politics and is eventually thrown into prison by the Communists because he doesn't recognize them as a threat. Yet he's likable, even lovable, and, in Menzel's gentle affirmations at the end of the movie, he has some fine moments as a middle-aged man. The small country, like the small man, gets pushed around by bullies but survives through instinct and guile. It's as if Menzel were celebrating not only Czech identity after the murderous twentieth century but his own cunning and perseverance as an artist.

Don Cheadle, the star of "Hotel Rwanda" and "Crash," has been one of the best reasons to go to the movies in recent years. An actor with a beautifully pensive and melancholy temperament, he reveals thoughts, and sometimes deepest miseries and profoundest doubts, through minute inflections of voice and expression—he never pushes too hard. He's the star of the new terrorism thriller "Traitor," and it's hard to imagine anyone else doing what he does. Based on an idea by Steve Martin (of all people), and written and directed by Jeffrey Nachmanoff, "Traitor" comes close to saying something serious, but it slips away into nonsense. Cheadle plays a tormented American Muslim from Chicago named Samir Horn. Born in Sudan, Samir is a former U.S. Special Services operative who, at the beginning of the movie, turns up in Yemen and sells bomb detonators to a terrorist group. He's arrested by the Yemeni authorities and thrown into prison, where he forms a bond of friendship with Omar, an ardent Moroccan terrorist played by the terrific French-born actor Saïd Taghmaoui. Sponsored by Omar, Samir throws in his lot with big-time terrorists planning a strike against the United States. He's "gone over" to the enemy.

At least, that's what Clayton (Guy Pearce), a persistent and highly airborne counter-terrorism specialist in the F.B.I., thinks. Clayton and his saturnine partner, Archer (Neal McDonough), track Samir around the globe and try to bring him in. What Clayton doesn't know is that Samir is being run by some sort of rogue C.I.A. operator (Jeff Daniels); his job is to infiltrate terrorist cells in order to capture a shadowy figure known as Nathir, who coördinates strikes against America. Despite its fresh settings (it was shot in Morocco and Marseilles as well as Chicago), and its interest in how terrorists recruit and train people and talk to one another, the movie has the familiar form of something like "Sleeper Cell," a Showtime mini-series from a few years back about an African-American Muslim who penetrates a terrorist group, or of an undercover-cop picture like "Donnie Brasco," in which the good-guy hero enters the Mafia and has to decide whether to take part in crimes in order to sustain his credibility among the hoods. Will Samir commit actual terrorist acts in order to protect his cover? He's a devout Muslim. Is he tempted by all the appeals to Islamist solidarity and martyrdom that he hears from the other men? Cheadle, stricken by doubt and guilt, takes this dilemma as far as the screenplay will let him, but the movie falters just when it should be at its boldest: it suggests that Samir is trapped by his situation, and the solution that he comes up with is presented, oddly, as a moral victory when it's actually a disaster. The filmmakers, I think, got in over their heads and couldn't decide whether they were making an action thriller or a drama of conscience; they wound up flubbing both.

Most of the violence is small-scale, which is a relief from the usual digital convulsions, and the acting is generally solid, though the terrorist leaders, when you meet them, are suave in the manner of those Hollywood Nazis from 1942 who ran art galleries and wore silk dressing gowns and spoke in the most cultivated tones. I don't know what such men are like, but I'm sure that this sinister sophistication is a cliché. "Traitor," at its most ambitious, tries to dramatize the fervent sense of solidarity among radical Islamists. It also awkwardly reminds us that not all Muslims advocate violence. Yet there's an incendiary element in the notion that seemingly ordinary American Muslims have been "planted" by foreign terrorists, and are just waiting for a signal to blow themselves and other Americans to smithereens. In its blundering way, the movie spreads a little paranoia and mistrust. ♦

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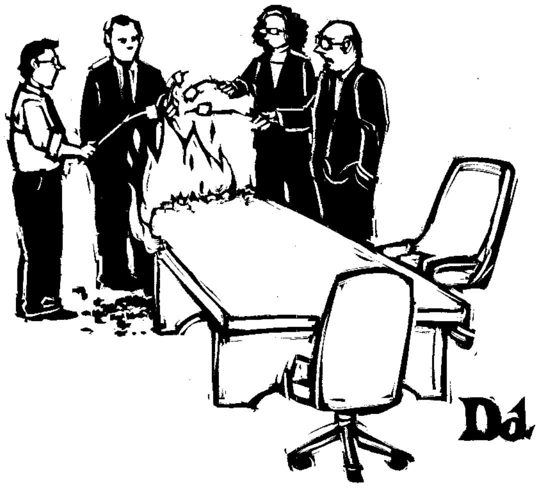
PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

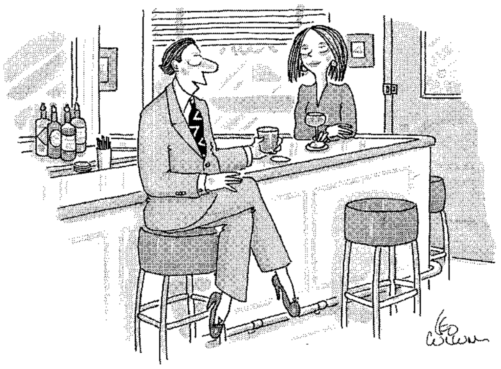
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Zachary Kanin, must be received by Sunday, August 31st. Finalists in the August 11th & 18th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 15th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"The first rule of s'mores club is you do not talk about s'mores club."
Jason Melancon, New Orleans, La.



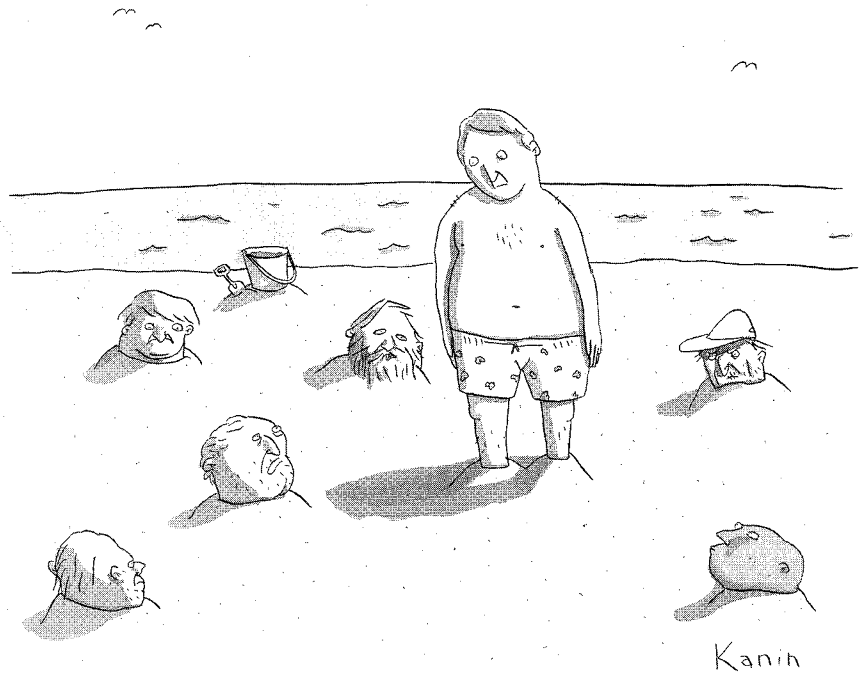
THE FINALISTS

"Actually, I'm not crazy about long walks on the beach."
Naji Chammas, Del Mar, Calif.

"I'm looking forward to casual Friday, when I can put on some flats."
Emily Milstein, Chilmark, Mass.

"I'm working my way up to a sex-change operation."
William Babula, Santa Rosa, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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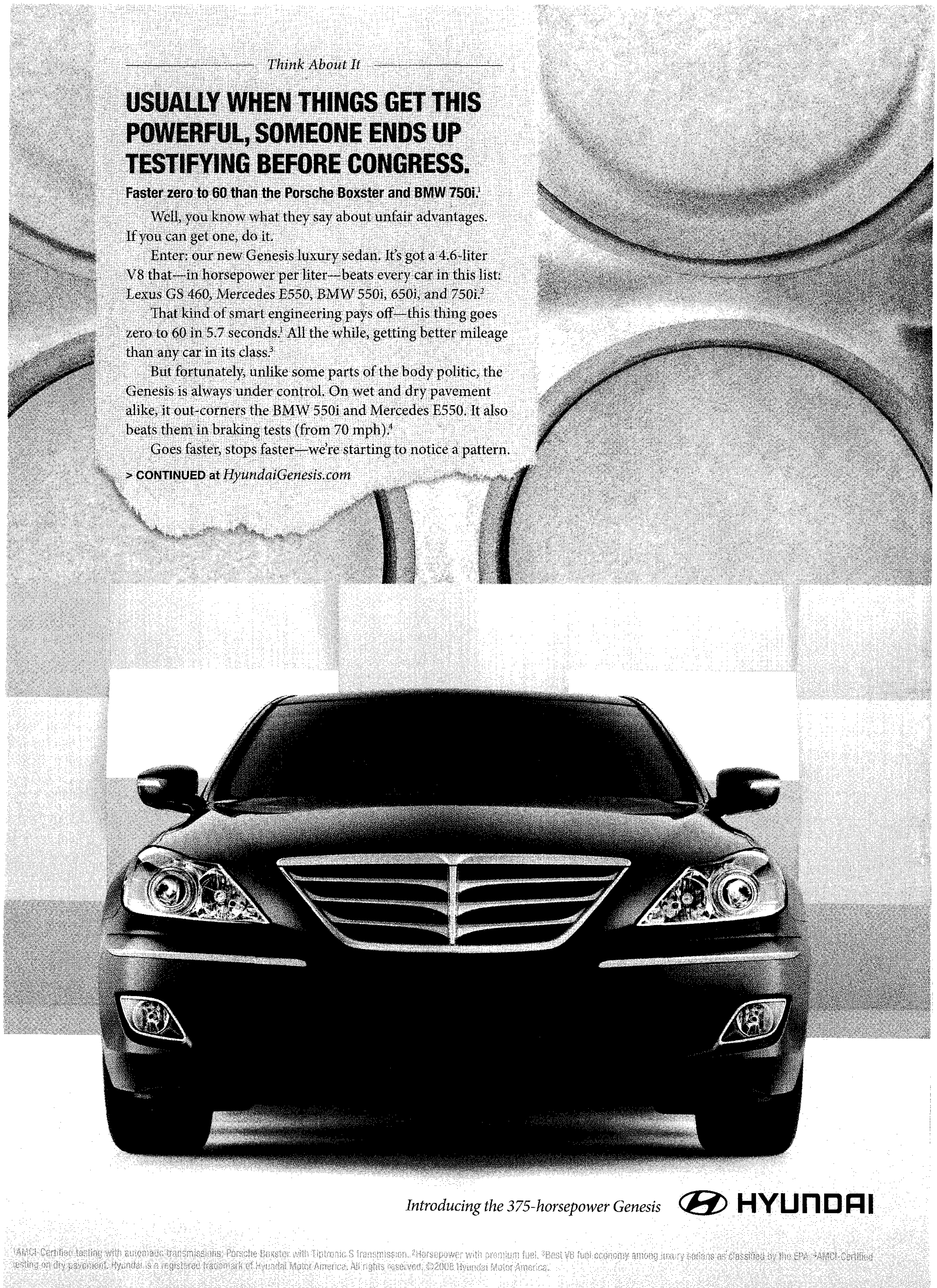


Think About It

USUALLY WHEN THINGS GET THIS POWERFUL, SOMEONE ENDS UP TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS.

Faster zero to 60 than the Porsche Boxster and BMW 750i.[1]

Well, you know what they say about unfair advantages. If you can get one, do it.

Enter: our new Genesis luxury sedan. It's got a 4.6-liter V8 that—in horsepower per liter—beats every car in this list: Lexus GS 460, Mercedes E550, BMW 550i, 650i, and 750i.[2]

That kind of smart engineering pays off—this thing goes zero to 60 in 5.7 seconds.[1] All the while, getting better mileage than any car in its class.[3]

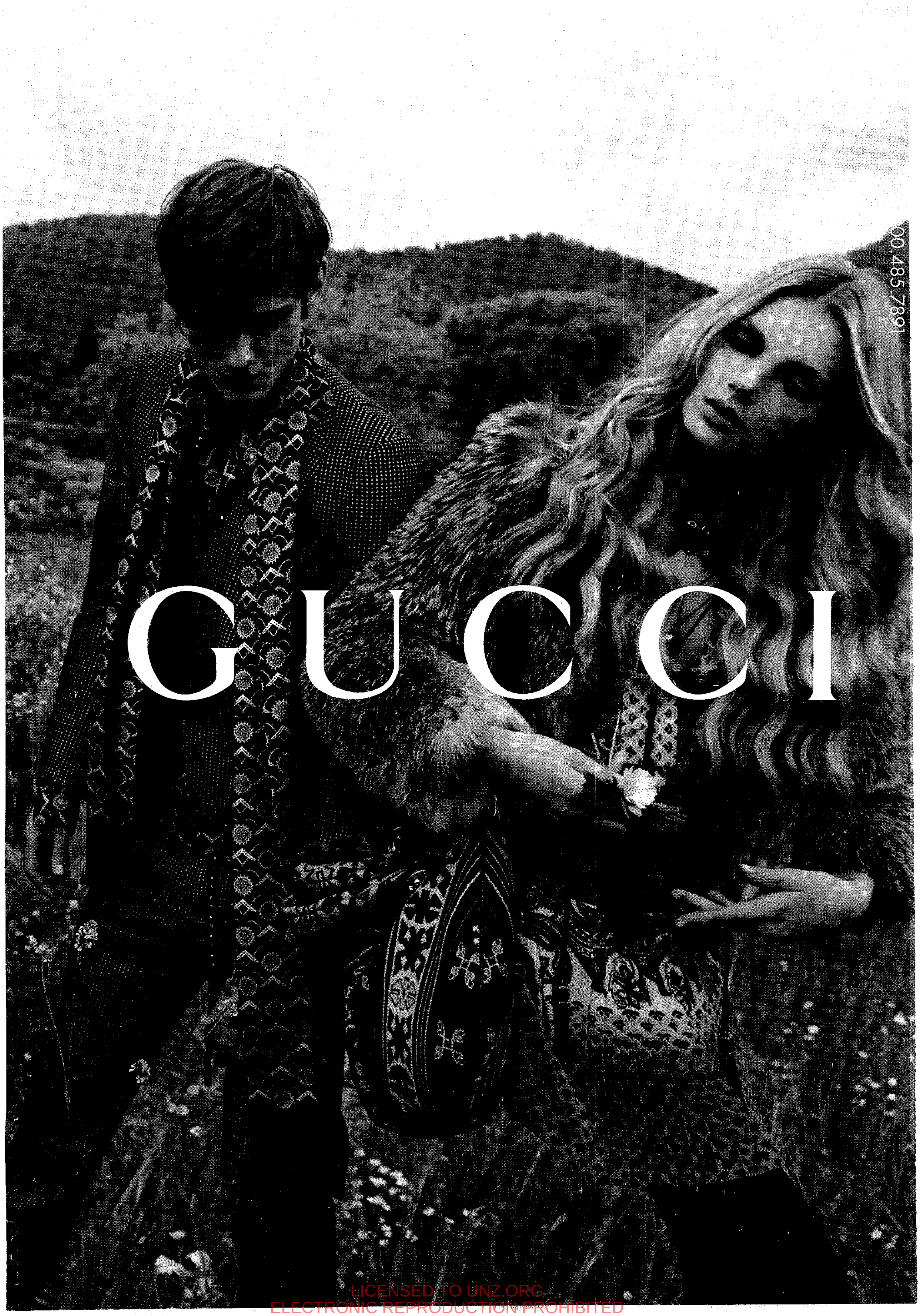
But fortunately, unlike some parts of the body politic, the Genesis is always under control. On wet and dry pavement alike, it out-corners the BMW 550i and Mercedes E550. It also beats them in braking tests (from 70 mph).[4]

Goes faster, stops faster—we're starting to notice a pattern.

> **CONTINUED** at *HyundaiGenesis.com*

Introducing the 375-horsepower Genesis HYUNDAI

[1]AMCI-Certified testing with automatic transmissions; Porsche Boxster with Tiptronic S transmission. [2]Horsepower with premium fuel. [3]Best V8 fuel economy among luxury sedans as classified by the EPA. [4]AMCI-Certified testing on dry pavement. Hyundai is a registered trademark of Hyundai Motor America. All rights reserved. ©2008 Hyundai Motor America.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